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THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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SERMONS

PRINCIPALLY DESIGNED

TO ILLUSTRATE AND TO ENFORCE

CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

BY

The Rev. THOMAS GISBORNE, M. A.

LONDON:

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1809.

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TO

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq.

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR THE COUNTY OF YORK,

AS A SLIGHT MEMORIAL

OF LONG AND AFFECTIONATE FRIENDSHIP;

AND AS AN ATTEMPT TO PROMOTE

PURE MORALITY,

THE FRUIT OF SCRIPTURAL FAITH,

THAT MORALITY WHICH

IN PUBLIC LIFE AND IN PRIVATE,

IT HAS BEEN HIS HABITUAL

AND EARNEST DESIRE

TO PRACTICE AND TO DIFFUSE;

THE FOLLOWING SERMONS

ARE INSCRIBED.

SERMONS.

I fear, for a degree of complaint; and in more, a colourable pretext for the imputation. I believe that ſome preachers, ſhocked on beholding examples, real or ſuppoſed, of congregations ſtarving on mere morality ſubſtituted for the bread of life; eager to lay broad and deep the foundations of the goſpel; and ultimately apprehenſive leſt their own hearers ſhould ſuſpect them of reverting towards *legality*; have not given to morals, as fruits of Faith, the ſtation and the amplitude to which they have a ſcriptural claim. Anxious leſt others ſhould miſtake, or leſt they ſhould themſelves be deemed to miſtake, the branch for the root: not ſatisfied with proclaiming to the branch, as they were bound habitually to proclaim, *Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee:* they have ſhrunk from the needful office of tracing the ramifications. They have not left morality out of their diſcourſes. But they have kept it too much in the background. They have noticed it ſhortly, generally, incidentally: in a manner which, while perhaps they were eminent as private patterns of moral duties, might not ſufficiently guard an unwary hearer againſt a reduced eſtimate of practical holineſs, nor exempt themſelves from the ſuſpicion of undervaluing moral obedience. We are continually

nually flying each from the other into oppoſite errors. It might be well for ſome of us to be more diſtinctly aware that to preach Chriſtian Morality, to preach it in detail, to take from time to time a ſpecific moral duty for the avowed ſubject of a ſermon, to purſue the duty through its ſubdiviſions, to point out its bearings on the tranſactions of common life, (be it obſerved that I ſpeak of morality rendered chriſtian by being unequivocally built on faith in Chriſt,) is not only not to be *legal*, but is to ſtrengthen by practical application the impreſſion of doctrinal truth, and to ſupply to the humble follower of our Lord aid highly important both as to the perception and the diſcharge of his daily obligations. There are others among us to whom it might be profitable if they were led clearly to diſcern, that to preach juſtification by faith, by faith only, without the deeds of the Law, (without the deeds either of the ceremonial or of the moral law contributing an atom towards the purchaſe of our juſtification, the free gift of God through the blood of His Son,) is not only to preach with the apoſtles and with the articles of our church, is not only not to *make void the law*, but is to *eſtabliſh the law* (*a*),

(*a*) Rom. iii. 31.

The

The mode of preaching which, in uniting and incorporating doctrinal with practical inſtruction, at one time diſcourſes ſpecifically on a doctrine, developes it, eſtabliſhes it, applies it to the advancement of holineſs: at another, leads ſound doctrine and correſponding practice hand in hand from the commencement to the cloſe: at another, ſelects a chriſtian or an unchriſtian diſpoſition, a moral or an immoral practice, as the prominent ſubject, yet anxiouſly and manifeſtly fixes on the Great Corner-ſtone every part of the ſuperſtructure: this I conceive to be the mode, by which a Chriſtian miniſter may hope the moſt efficaciouſly *to declare all the counſel of God* (*b*).

(*b*) Acts, xx. 27.

CON-

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SERMON I.

Our Lord Jesus Christ the Foundation of Morality.

1 Cor. iii. 11.

Other Foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

WE are accuſtomed to hear Morality mentioned as a ſubject diſtinct from Religion. This ſeparation in common language is not ſurpriſing; as we daily ſee many actions, literally conſiſtent with moral precepts, performed from motives, in which religion has no part. The habit, however, of regarding morality as disjoined from religion is not only erroneous, but highly pernicious. Religion, conſtituting the ſum of human duty, conſiſts of two branches, piety and morality. Piety compriſes the diſpoſitions and actions of which God is the immediate object;

morality, thoſe of which other beings are immediately the objects. Thus adoration is an act of piety: compaſſion to a man or to a brute, and ſelf-government, are acts of morality.

As there are various diſpoſitions which may be exerciſed either towards God or towards man; there are proceedings which at one time are to be ranked under piety, at another under morality. Thus love to God is an act of piety; love to men for his ſake, of morality.

Sometimes a moral duty, the breach of which involves peculiar guilt, popularly takes the appellation of piety. Thus love to parents has been denominated filial piety. But the nature of an action is not altered by an accidental change of term.

In every reſpect, and from firſt to laſt, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is the corner-ſtone of our ſalvation. From him ariſes the beginning of religion, repentance. *Him hath God exalted to be a prince and a Saviour to give repentance (a)*, no leſs than *forgiveneſs of ſins.* From him proceeds faith: *he is the author and finiſher of it. (b)*. From him is derived our reconciliation with God: *Through him we have acceſs to the Father.*

(*a*) Acts, v. 31. (*b*) Heb. xii. 2.

Being

Being juſtified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. We were *redeemed by the precious blood of Chriſt; and his blood cleanſeth us from all ſin (c).* In the comprehenſive language of the Scriptures, he *is made, unto us wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption (d).*

It is to our Redeemer, viewed as the foundation of Chriſtian morality, that our attention is now to be ſpecially directed. *Other foundation can no man lay*, conſiſtently with the revealed will of God; conſiſtently with any rational hope of erecting a capacious and laſting ſuperſtructure. The world lays its own foundations of morality. It builds upon expediency, or upon honour, or upon cuſtom. The foundation and the morality built upon it are ſuited each to the other. The one is *ſand*; the other, *wood, hay, and ſtubble.* The building may look fair at a diſtance. It may ſeem in the ſeaſon of tranquillity and ſunſhine to ſtand firm. But when *the fire* of temptation *ſhall try every man's work of what ſort it is*, it ſhall not abide: when the rains ſhall deſcend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon that houſe, it ſhall fall, and great ſhall be the fall of it. But

(c) Eph. ii. 18. Rom. v. 1. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. 1 John, i. 7.
(d) 1 Cor. i. 30.

thus ſhall it be with the morality of the ſervant of Chriſt. He builds on the corner-ſtone which God himſelf has laid; and builds upon it *gold, ſilver, precious ſtones.* His work *ſhall be revealed by fire:* by ſuſtaining the flames, its excellency ſhall be manifeſted. When the rains deſcend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon that houſe, it falls not; for it is founded upon a rock.

In various reſpects our Lord Jeſus Chriſt may be contemplated as the foundation of Chriſtian morality.

In the firſt place, our Saviour has fully communicated and interpreted the moral law of God.

The moral law of God, is that law under which the human race, as ſubject to his moral government, is placed. It includes not only faith and love, and all other holy diſpoſitions and actions, of which God is the *immediate* object; but thoſe duties alſo, which for his ſake are to be performed towards men, and are uſually compriſed under the name of morality. Being in its nature neceſſarily correſpondent to his own inherent perfections of holineſs, juſtice, and benevolence; it is, like them, in its ſubſtance unchangeable. To different perſons, however, at the ſame time,

or to the ſame perſons at different periods, it may be made known, according to his good pleaſure, in different degrees. To the Jews, and through them to many other nations, it has been largely diſcloſed by the hand of Moſes, and of the other inſpired writers of the Old Teſtament. Among the Gentiles *God* never has *left* it *without* witneſs. They, *which have not the law, do*, by the light of *nature*, more or leſs of *the things contained in the law*; and *ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs (e)*. But it is by Him who came into the world to be the light of the world, that new and complete luſtre was poured upon the moral law. That which was originally permitted to be leſs diſtinct in it, he made clear. That which had been corrupted by traditions and commandments of men, he purified. By explanations, by compariſons, by parables, he illuſtrated the bearing and operation of moral rules on the daily proceedings of common life; and by ſhewing the application of the precepts to a variety of caſes, pointed out the method of applying them to all. Having come upon earth, *that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works:*

(e) Rom. ii. 14, 15.

... Chriſt

... all the fulneſs of
... himſelf were hid all
... knowledge; that, as
... his heavenly Father, he
... penſation which ſhould
... of time; he did not leave
... purpoſe incomplete. He
... men in every particular of
... filling upon them the in-
... ction between faith and obe-
... reverence of God, and right
... man: he taught them *to love*
God with all the heart, and their
neighbours themſelves; to live ſoberly, righ-
teouſly in this preſent world; to cleanſe
themſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit,
perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.

Secondly, Chriſt is the propitiation for
... ches of morality.

For the violation of any moral duty the
... of God is denounced. *Curſed be he that*
... light by his father or mother. Curſed be he
that removeth his neighbour's landmark. Curſed
be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the
way. Curſed be he that perverteth the judgement
of the ſtranger, the fatherleſs, and the widow.
Curſed be he that ſmiteth his neighbour ſecretly.
Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things,
and conſequently in all moral duties, no leſs
than

than in all other things, *which are written in the book of the law to do them (f)*. The neglect and the tranſgreſſion of the duties of morality have formed, in every age, a large portion of the maſs of human guilt. When Chriſt, therefore, came to *redeem us from the curſe of the law, by being* himſelf *made a curſe for us (g)*; it was in part to deliver us from the penal conſequences which we had brought upon ourſelves by diſobedience in points of moral duty. It was in part to atone for our breaches of moral duty that he laid aſide the form of God, and took upon him *the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of man, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs.* In every ſtage of his humiliation, in every pang of his ſuffering, our breach of moral duty had its ſhare. What a leſſon has he thus delivered to us of the importance of moral obedience! What a ſanction has he added to the obligation of moral duty! Behold in his humiliation and death for the immoral actions of men, a new teſtimony that he is the corner-ſtone of morality!

Farther: it is conformably to the example of Chriſt, that obedience to the precepts of morality is in every point to be rendered to God.

(f) Deut. xxvii. 16, &c. Gal. iii. 10. (g) Gal. iii. 13.

In all things he has left us *an example that we ſhould follow his ſteps. He was holy, harmleſs, undefiled, ſeparate from ſinners.* In his childhood he was willingly ſubject to Mary his mother, and her huſband Joſeph. Throughout his life, his uniform employment was *doing good.* Not deſiring that any ſhould miniſter unto him, he was conſtantly miniſtering unto others. Not *pleaſing himſelf*, not only unacquainted with ſelf-indulgence, but continually making ſacrifices of needful repoſe; he laboured in painfulneſs and wearineſs for the temporal and the ſpiritual benefit of men. It was *his meat and drink* to do the will of his heavenly Father. *He did no ſin; neither was guile found in his mouth.* He ſpake the truth, and bore witneſs to the truth, at the expence of his life. To the perverſe ignorance, unbelief, and prejudices of his diſciples he ſhewed the moſt tender forbearance; to their deſertion and denial of him the moſt endearing forgiveneſs. *When he was reviled, he reviled not again*; when he *ſuffered he threatened not, but committed himſelf to Him who judgeth righteouſly. He was as a lamb led to the ſlaughter; and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth* in complaint, but prayed for thoſe who were nailing him to the croſs. He inſiſted not on his rightful privileges; but, that he might not

not give offence, diſcharged by a miracle the tribute which he was not bound to pay. On the inhoſpitable Samaritans he permitted not the infliction of puniſhment. To his malignant countrymen at Nazareth he renewed his labour of love, at a ſecond riſk of being thrown headlong from their precipice. In every other part of his conduct, as in the inſtances which have been ſpecified, our Lord proved himſelf by his own practice, a practice which every one of his followers is pledged to imitate, to be the corner-ſtone of morality.

In the next place, ſcriptural obedience to moral precepts can be attained only through the grace which Chriſt ſupplies.

Without Me—theſe were his own words to his favoured diſciples—*without Me ye can do nothing. I am the vine, ye are the branches.* As the *branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.* The heart of man, naturally ſelfiſh, proud, envious, prone to paſſion, to ſenſuality, to every evil work, cannot perform an act of holineſs, but through the Holy Spirit which is the gift of Chriſt. Even with reſpect to the attainment of faith, *no man can ſay that Jeſus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghoſt (b).*

(*b*) 1 Cor. xii. 3.

How

How then ſhall integrity, and brotherly love, and humility, and meekneſs, and gentleneſs, and temperance, and purity, and long-ſuffering, and forgiveneſs, fruits of faith, *fruits of the ſpirit*, be produced, but by the Holy Ghoſt? And if the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, when he aſcended up on high, received *gifts for men*, even *the reſidue of the Spirit*, the entire communication and diſtribution of the graces of the Holy Spirit: if we, who of ourſelves are unable to do any thing that is good, may yet be rendered capable ſeverally of ſaying with St. Paul, *I can do all things through Chriſt who ſtrengtheneth me*: Is not Chriſt the corner-ſtone of moral conduct towards men?

Farther: It is only through the Lord Jeſus, through the efficacy of his prevailing merits, that our moral conduct towards men can be acceptable in the ſight of God.

Scanty, through innumerable defects, polluted by a continual admixture of evil, how ſhall the beſt moral actions of men bear the ſcrutiny of a heart-ſearching God? Weighed in the balance of the Sanctuary, what human deed ſhall not be found wanting? *If ye offer the blind for ſacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and ſick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor: will he be pleaſed with thee, or accept thy perſon, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts*

Hoſts (i)? Too well may this deſcription be applied to the moſt excellent of human actions! Some poſitive merit, ſome adventitious righteouſneſs, ſome ſufficient propitiation, ſome adequate interceſſion, muſt be interpoſed on their behalf, ere they can be meet to be preſented before Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; ere they can be reſcued from the ſentence of His unchanging law, which can tolerate no imperfection. In Jeſus Chriſt, and in him alone, they find that ranſom of which they ſtand in need. For his ſake, the infirmities of his ſervants are overlooked; the defects of their faithful efforts to keep his commandments are pardoned. For his ſake their obedience is accepted of God, and recompenſed, through grace wholly unmerited, as though it had been, ſo far as it had proceeded, a fulfilment of the law.

There muſt yet be brought forward another conſideration, which places our Lord before us as the foundation of morality. It is to pleaſe him, or in other equivalent words, to pleaſe God through him, that our views in the diſcharge of moral duties are always to be directed.

The word of God *ſpeaketh expreſsly*, that

(i) Malachi, i. 8.

all

all men ſhould honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. To live unto him who died for us, and to do all for the glory of God, that God may in all things be glorified through Jeſus Chriſt, are commands of the ſame import. They are commands from whoſe ſcope and juriſdiction no action of man is exempt. Whatever participates of the nature of morality, be it inward diſpoſition or outward conduct, be it thought, or word, or deed, is completely ſubject to their controul. To render an action morally acceptable through our Redeemer to God, is it ſufficient that the action accord with the literal tenor of the precept? To affirm this propoſition would be to affirm, that the ſervice of formality ranks on a level with the offering of the heart. It would be to affirm, that the conſtrained ſubmiſſion of fear is equally pleaſing in the eyes of our Creator with the zealous gratitude of love. It would be to affirm, that, if you are honeſt through policy, it is the ſame as though you were upright through principle. It would be to affirm, that when you are temperate through conſiderations of health, it is the ſame as when you keep your appetites under ſubjection to the dictates of conſcience. It would be to affirm, that motives are nothing; that whether an action, verbally

verbally conſiſtent with a ſcriptural injunction, be the reſult of ſelfiſhneſs or of ſelf-denial; of ſpiritual mindedneſs or of pride; whether it be done for the honour of God and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, or in conformity to the ſuggeſtions of the world, the fleſh, and the devil; there is no moral difference in the conduct of the agent, nor any difference as to the manner in which the deed will be appreciated at the great day of account and retribution. To expoſe ſuch a doctrine, it is not neceſſary to refer to the Scriptures. In a caſe ſo plain, *why even of ourſelves judge we not what is right?* No action whatever, though fulfilling the wideſt extent of the letter of a divine commandment, partakes of Chriſtian morality, is included within the limits of ſcriptural *goodneſs*, is in any degree authoriſed to hope through the merits of Chriſt for acceptance with God, except ſo far as the obedience to the divine commandment has ultimately proceeded from a deſire to pleaſe our God and Saviour. No other obedience is obedience to the Father and the Son. And on what grounds ſhall man contend that obedience, not rendered to Them, ſhall be accepted and rewarded by Them?

In every reſpect, then, and from firſt to laſt, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is the corner-

ſtone of morality. *Other foundation can no man lay.* If this momentous truth be eſtabliſhed, be it our care to have it fixed in our hearts: be it our care to build our morality on that foundation, which has been laid by the hand of God; and to build upon it that morality, which our Lord himſelf has taught. The morality of our Lord *is not of the world, therefore the world hateth it*; diſlikes its purity, complains of its ſtrictneſs, puts aſide ſome of its precepts, and labours to curtail, and pare down, and circumſcribe the reſt. Let us look not to the world, not to the maxims of the wiſeſt of the human race, but to a higher and purer ſource, for the knowledge of our duties; even to Chriſt, the infallible revealer of the will of his Father, *the author and finiſher* of the law of Chriſtian morality. *Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord,* who came to be *the light of the world.* The moral precepts of Scripture are of the number of thoſe commandments, for the tranſgreſſion of which he died to atone. They are of the number of thoſe concerning which we have his recorded declaration: *Whoſoever ſhall break one of the leaſt of theſe commandments, and ſhall teach men ſo, he ſhall be called leaſt in the kingdom of heaven. But whoſoever ſhall do and*

teach them, the ſame ſhall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (k). They are of the number of thoſe commandments, with a reference to which his apoſtle pronounces, that *neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners,* nor they who are guilty of *hatred,* or of *variance,* or of *emulations,* or of *wrath,* or of *ſtrife,* or of *ſedition,* or of *envying,* or of *murder,* or of *revelling,* ſhall *inherit the kingdom of God (l). Let no man deceive you with vain words,* intimating that you may perſiſt in any of theſe ſins and be ſaved. Vain and deceitful words! Wretched the man who is beguiled by them! *For becauſe of theſe things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of diſobedience (m).* Whoſoever obſtinately perſeveres in the violation of any moral duty, remains under the curſe of the broken law. He *ſhall not ſee life: the wrath of God abideth on him (n).* If it is with ſincerity that we profeſs to be the followers of Chriſt, let us take his example for our pattern. Let us walk in the path which he has traced for us, if we would reach the kingdom to which he directed his courſe. If

(*k*) Matt. v. 19. (*l*) 1 Cor. v. 9, 10. Gal. 19—21.
(*m*) Eph. v. 6. Col. iii. 6. (*n*) Gal. iii. 10. John, iii. 36.

we

we hope to be made *like him (o)* in that world of glory; let us ſeek to attain to ſome faint reſemblance of his moral perfections, while we are in the body. But in ſtriving for the acquiſition of Chriſtian morality, let us purſue it in the Chriſtian way. Let us remember that *it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do:* that *we are not ſufficient of ourſelves to think*, much leſs to do, *any thing as of ourſelves, but our ſufficiency is of God:* that it is the *grace of Chriſt which is*, and muſt be, *ſufficient for us*, the grace of the Holy Spirit, *the Spirit of Chriſt*, which our Lord beſtows. Do we ſtand in need of warnings to admoniſh us from time to time, that it is only through the grace of Chriſt that genuine morality can be attained? Let us turn our eyes to thoſe men, who are attempting to attain it by their own ſtrength. Behold them for a ſeaſon apparently ſucceſsful. Witneſs their ſelf-complacency. Hear their vauntings, and the vauntings of their admirers! But withdraw not your attention from them. See them at once overcome by the paſſion or the appetite, which they believed themſelves to have maſtered. See them aſtoniſhed at their own defeat, and paſſively declining any future conteſt. Or behold them rouſed by

(o) 1 John, iii. 2.

wounded

wounded pride, and renewing with vehemence their exertions for victory. See them again confident of ſucceſs; again foiled; rallying anew; vanquiſhed ſtill more ſhamefully. Give them the higheſt praiſe to which, under the moſt favourable circumſtances, they are entitled; and what is its amount? They ſtruggle againſt common temptations, and when brought to a more than ordinary trial, are overcome. Or they reſiſt ſins of ſome particular claſs, ſins perhaps to which they are by natural conſtitution the leaſt inclined; and indulge in other more attractive gratifications. Or they guard the outward conduct, with little of inward regulation of the tempers and diſpoſitions. Would you ſurvey morality that is enlarged, conſiſtent, humble, devout? Look for it in him whoſe ſole dependence is on the grace of his Redeemer. That man's morality will be humble; and no other morality is Chriſtian. That man will feel, and will confeſs how very far his moral attainments fall below the ſtandard of his duty; how defective they are in themſelves; how cloſely accompanied by tranſgreſſions and omiſſions in every branch of moral obedience; how unworthy of the divine acceptance, but through the mediation of a

Saviour. Such be your feelings, your cordial confeſſions! And finally, let your obedience be rendered to Chriſt. Be moral for his ſake: be moral for the ſpecial purpoſe of pleaſing God through him. If your morality be without that main purpoſe, hope not for its acceptance. If you do your alms that you may have glory of men, you may obtain that glory. And in that glory you have your reward; the reward your oſtentation ſought; the only reward which you ſhall receive: *you have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.* If you are honeſt for the ſake of your worldly advancement, you may gain advancement; and in that advancement you have the reward which you purſued, the only reward which integrity ſuch as yours ſhall poſſeſs. If your leading motive for cultivating amiable tempers, and manifeſting kindneſs in domeſtic life, is that you may render your relatives and connections attached to you, you may win their attachment; and in that attachment you have your reward, you have the remuneration which you deſired, the only recompence which you will receive. *You have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.* How different is the meed of the ſervant of Chriſt!

Nor

Not the ſlighteſt act of ſelf-denial, not the loweſt deed of juſtice, not the gift of a cup of cold water; not the humbleſt manifeſtation, in whatever form, of moral rectitude, *for the ſake of the Lord Jeſus*, ſhall loſe its reward.

SERMON II.

On the Evils reſulting from False Principles of Morality.

ISAIAH, viii. 20.

To the Law and to the Teſtimony! If they ſpeak not according to this Word, it is becauſe there is no Light in them.

IT happens almoſt of neceſſity, and under ſome points of view the circumſtance muſt be deemed a misfortune, that erroneous principles which prevail in morals lead, in various inſtances, to the ſame concluſions which flow from principles that are ſound. The wiſdom of God has ſo cloſely connected and bound up the obſervance of moral duties with the welfare and the peace of ſociety, that any principle which, in its immediate conſequences, ſhould be generally ſubverſive of the rules of integrity, juſtice, and kind-

neſs;

neſs; nay, which ſhould not apparently diſplay a favourable countenance to ſome branches of moral rectitude, would not attain extenſive and laſting influence in a country moderately enlightened. The true concluſions inferred from falſe principles will be intimately blended with imperfections and miſtakes. The coin will be debaſed by a large portion of alloy: but it will preſerve a ſufficient ſemblance of the precious metal to become current among the careleſs, and to acquire ſome credit with all except accurate obſervers. In proportion as theſe concluſions are conſiſtent with any of the moral precepts of Scripture, they win the apparent ſanction of the word of God for the principle from which they are derived. Whenever they deviate from the ſcriptural rule, it is always on the ſide of relaxation. Hence again, the principle advances in the eſtimation of the world. "Here," men exclaim, "is a ſober and "rational criterion of moral conduct. Here "is morality, uſeful, but not puritanical; "correct, but not rigid: ſecuring the inte-"reſts of ſociety, but not puſhing matters "to extremes: upholding the rule in ordi-"nary caſes, but liberally conceding every "needful exception; and regarding with

" due lenity the erring agent who, under " the influence of temptation, adopts the " exception when it might have been more " prudent to have obſerved the rule."

In an early part of the preceding diſcourſe I had occaſion briefly to allude to the three erroneous principles of morality, which, in the preſent day, are prevalent among ourſelves, expediency, honour, and cuſtom. Several of their effects may deſerve diſtinct conſideration. But ſome few words muſt previouſly be aſſigned to remarks on the principles themſelves.

Expediency, borrowed from the ſtorehouſe of ſceptical philoſophy, and placed, by its wiſeſt defenders, as nearly as might be done, on a Chriſtian foundation, pronounces that an action is right or wrong accordingly as it tends to promote or to diminiſh general happineſs. Whatever is expedient is right. Every moral precept is ſubject to exceptions. And of the expediency of regarding or diſregarding the precept every man is in every caſe to judge for himſelf.

Honour, as a principle of action, refers to the eſtimation of the claſs of ſociety in which the individual moves, and particularly of the higher ranks, whoſe opinions will ever be of the moſt preponderating influence.

influence. Its concern reſpecting moral actions is limited to ſuch as are uſeful in faſhionable intercourſe: and is particularly beſtowed on thoſe which have ſomewhat of ſplendor, commonly of falſe ſplendor, in their exterior appearances.

Cuſtom is the general guide of thoſe perſons who give little thought to the inveſtigation of principles, and take their moral opinions upon truſt from others.

On the claim of each or of all of theſe ſtandards of right and wrong to determine the judgement and direct the conduct, it is ſufficient to ſay, that no one of them is the ſcriptural ſtandard. They all depart from *the law and the teſtimony. They ſpeak not according to this word:* therefore *there is no light in them.*

Let us now advert to their effects.

I. One effect will be this: the morality produced will be uncertain and variable.

What conſiſtency, what ſtability, can be expected in the morals, which are deduced from expediency? Wiſe men, be it admitted, ſitting tranquil in their cloſets, and coolly viewing life and its temptations at a diſtance, may logically derive from the principle of expediency many moral rules analogous to

injunctions of Holy Writ. But when theſe wiſe men are brought forward into the tumult of buſineſs; when they are not to ſpeculate, but to feel; when they are to decide, not for others, but for themſelves: will they always retain their views of expediency unaltered? Will they always prefer their former concluſions to their preſent impreſſions? And what will be the caſe with the multitude which is leſs wiſe? Every man is diſtinctly informed that, with reſpect to every moral precept, and on every occaſion of applying it, he is to judge for himſelf whether expediency will be moſt promoted by obeying or by diſregarding it. Loſing ſight, and he muſt widely differ from the great maſs of the followers of expediency if he will not practically loſe ſight, of ultimate tendencies to general happineſs in preſent tendencies to his own private intereſt or perſonal indulgence; judging under the immediate influence of wiſhes or of fears; deciding in the very moment of temptation: is this the man whoſe morality ſhall be conſiſtent? His accommodating principle of morals will continually bend or be bent to circumſtances. What he deſires will recommend itſelf as expedient. What he diſlikes will wear the aſpect of tendencies ultimately unfavour-

unfavourable to general happineſs. His moral proceedings will reſemble the wanderings of a ſhip without ballaſt, *driven by the wind and toſſed.*

What ſteadineſs is to be expected in morals which depend on human eſtimation? How changeable is po ular opinion, not merely on light occurrences of the day, but on political ſubjects and other grave topics, to which much reflection had been devoted! A kindred fluctuation will be manifeſt, and from hiſtory and experience it is manifeſt, in moral ſentiments. Among perſons who look to human eſtimation, to the tone of opinion prevalent in the higher circles, as a moral guide, there will be faſhions in morals. At one time one moral virtue will advance a ſtep in repute. Then it will loſe ground; and another, favoured by the tide of circumſtances, will take the lead. To theſe cauſes of unſteadineſs in the morality built upon honour the following conſideration is to be ſubjoined. This morality lives upon character. In proportion as it is withdrawn from public obſervation, it languiſhes. In proportion as men, who act on the principle of honour, foreſee a probability that their conduct in a particular inſtance will not become known in thoſe ranks of ſociety, for whoſe

whoſe countenance they are ſolicitous, the hold which their principle has upon them is weakened. According to the viciſſitudes of ſuch probabilities their morality will vary.

What ſolidity can we anticipate in morality reſting upon cuſtom? As little as in cuſtom itſelf. In men whoſe moral opinions borrow their hue from the complexion of thoſe which prevail in the neighbourhood; conſiſtency in moral reaſoning, when upon ſpecial occaſions they are rouſed to a little reaſoning on topics of this deſcription, is not to be found. The ſubject is new to them. It poſſeſſes no attraction in their eyes. A more intelligent and more welcome guide is at hand. "I do not wiſh to perplex "myſelf with metaphyſics. I ſhall indulge "no abſurd ſcruples. I do not profeſs to be "better than others. I am not aſhamed of "keeping to the road in which the re-"ſpectable people around me are walking." Such, when interpreted into words, are the thoughts of the followers of cuſtom. How can their morality, ſuſtained by no knowledge, invigorated by no habits of inveſtigation, wandering with the wanderings of the crowd, be other than inconſtant and uncertain?

From

From a ſurvey of the variable morality produced by theſe falſe principles of morals, theſe *blind guides leading the blind* in perpetual aberrations, turn to the morality of the Scriptures. Behold it firm, conſiſtent, immutable: not committing its precepts to the juriſdiction of man, and inveſting him with a diſpenſing power to ſuſpend or to abrogate them at his diſcretion; but commanding him univerſally to be faithful in obeying them, and to leave conſequences with God: not ſubjecting its mandates and prohibitions to the ſanction of human eſtimation, nor to the controul of human practice; but requiring the implicit obſervance of them all, as being all ſtamped with the ſame ſeal of authority which the Decalogue bears on its front—*God ſpake all theſe words!*

II. Another effect of the erroneous principles under examination is, that the morality produced is low in degree.

How can elevated morality reſult from expediency? The moſt powerful allurement which that principle poſſeſſes, is its accommodating nature. The favourite ſervice on which it is employed is to looſen the bands of rigid precepts; to obtain room for inclination to purſue its purpoſe without moleſtation

tation to conſcience. Look to hiſtory, ancient and modern, and mark what is the defence alleged for any enormity at which you revolt. Is it not almoſt in every caſe expediency? Contemplate private life; lay your finger on evil practices; enquire what can be alleged in vindication of their continuance. In almoſt every caſe the anſwer will be expediency. It is expediency which is the regular defence for every proceeding, for which no other defence can be deviſed. Of what nature will be the morals, of which ſuch a principle is the ſource?

How can pure morality reſult from the principle of honour? Honour looks not to God. To look to God is the characteriſtic of conſcience. Honour looks to men; and to men circumſcribed within a particular ſphere. To the eſtimation of men within that ſphere, it limits its moral views, and its moral conduct. To a man who moves within that ſphere it pays an illegal gaming-debt: to a famiſhed artiſan, without the circumference, it permits the refuſal of the due recompenſe of labour. Moral qualities uſeful in ſmoothing the intercourſe and mutual tranſactions of the inhabitants of that ſphere, it approves in the abſtract; requires them to the degree in which they are thus uſeful; is

loud in its praiſes of them when carried to that degree: beyond that degree concerns not itſelf with them. Immoralities not immediately affecting that intercourſe it regards with indifference. Neither gluttony, nor drunkenneſs, nor paſſion, nor impurity, degrades the appellation of a man of honour. Humility is branded as meanneſs of ſpirit; placability as cowardice. Where the law of God proclaims, *Thou ſhall do no murder*; honour commands the duel. With the folly which belongs to an unchriſtian principle, it pronounces this ſin a counterpoiſe to paſt tranſgreſſion. Have we not examined ample ſpecimens of the wretched morality of honour?

Are we to expect high morality to be the offspring of cuſtom? What is cuſtom? The practice of a corrupt world. On what is it founded? On ſelfiſhneſs: on ſelfiſhneſs ſtudying to gratify the pride, or to indulge the ſenſuality, or to puſh the intereſt, of the moment. What are the natural conſequences? Deviations from the incommodious ſtrictneſs of general precepts; and the eſtabliſhment of maxims giving their ſanction to relaxation in conduct.

From the view of the debaſed morality originating in falſe principles, direct your eyes again

again to the word of God. Behold the morality which it teaches, worthy of Him, ſuited to man! Behold it manifeſting itſelf by its holineſs to be a tranſcript of the holineſs of God! Behold it as a branch of that *godlineſs*, which *has the promiſe of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come* (*a*): behold it conducing to the happineſs of men, preſent no leſs than future: to their future happineſs, as one of the qualifications by which, under their Redeemer's grace, they are to be made *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints in light* (*b*); to their preſent happineſs, as proſcribing every paſſion, every diſpoſition, every action, which diſturbs the harmony of the world, and enjoining univerſal love between all the individuals of the human race. Behold it not partially confining its benefits to ſelect claſſes of ſociety; but with outſpread arms ſhowering them down upon all. Behold it diſplaying from age to age its hallowed truths, uncorrupt, unſullied, as the ſource from which it flows. Behold it exemplified in the fulneſs of perfection, by Him who is the corner-ſtone of Chriſtian morality; by the incarnate Son of God; even by Him who was *God manifeſt in the fleſh*.

(*a*) 1 Tim. iv. 8. (*b*) Col. i. 12.

III. The

III. The miſchief produced by falſe principles of morality will be very extenſive.

It is on moral diſpoſitions and moral conduct that theſe principles operate. And it is in the government of moral diſpoſitions, and in the exerciſe of them in moral actions, that much of the employment of life conſiſts. When is the hour of buſineſs, when is the hour of leiſure, in which moral principle is not required to be in operation? If that principle be falſe; to what an extent is its influence felt! If the fountain be poiſoned, the ſtreams are corrupted; and they are ſtreams whoſe ſubdiviſions overſpread the country, and carry their waters to every corner of the land. Conſider alſo the native proneneſs of the mind of man to embrace principles, which render the indulgence of evil propenſities more eaſy and more comfortable, by repreſenting that indulgence as harmleſs or venial. Every falſe ſyſtem of morals is a ſyſtem of convenience; a ſyſtem narrowing the range, ſlackening the reſtraints, ſubſtracting from the amount, enfeebling the energy, of moral obligation. Place ſuch a ſyſtem before men; and what numbers will haſten to adopt it! Weigh the evidence of facts. How numerous are the pupils of expediency! How full the ranks of the vota-

'ries of honour! What crowds are enſlaved to cuſtom! With what pertinacity do theſe multitudes cling to the principles which they have choſen; principles, the commodiouſneſs of which they have ſo frequently proved! Another conſideration of prime importance is yet to be ſtated. While truth diſclaims all alliance, all connection, with falſehood; errors confederate and co-operate with errors. The unwarranted principles of morality, which have been diſcuſſed, amicably unite each with the other; and frequently occupy the ſame boſom in double or in triple partnerſhip. The individuals, whoſe morality falls under this deſcription, appear far to exceed in number the excluſive adherents of any one falſe principle. As each of the principles in queſtion poſſeſſes its own attractions; as in the mixed intercourſe of the world, each is daily preſenting itſelf to the followers of another, and recommending its maxims by the aid of example; it naturally enſues that the majority of the perſons who are not religiouſly watchful to be ſtedfaſt in the pure morality of the Goſpel, fall under the influence of all the three. In the minds of ſuch men, moral perceptions are commonly indiſtinct and confuſed. The ſlender catalogue of their concluſions is drawn from different

ferent ſources. In part it conſiſts of a few of the plainer moral precepts of Scripture. For ſome other rules, if rules they are to be called, it ſtands indebted to cuſtom. Theſe are followed by maxims of expediency. And the whole is completed by ſcraps borrowed from the laws of honour. This laſt principle, be it the moſt or the leaſt influential on their practice, is uſually named by them with particular reſpect, and with ſpecial tokens of ſelf-complacency. Each individual is ſecretly flattered by the hope, that to profeſs the adoption of a rule of conduct, high in eſtimation among the upper claſſes of ſociety, may remind or perſuade others that he belongs to that diviſion of ſociety; or at leaſt that its opinions are familiar to him, and congenial with his own.

If from any one of the falſe principles, which have been brought under review, moral errors, ſo numerous and ſo pernicious, are conſtantly originating; what muſt be the maſs of error produced by the detached operations of the three, and by the allied exertions of all!

The cloſe contemplation of danger endears the path of ſafety. We turn with augmented gratitude to that antidote to falſe morality, that perfect ſtandard of moral excellence, the

word of God. While the world is learning deluſion from its own imaginations; from that word let the Chriſtian learn wiſdom. *To the law and to the teſtimony!* Be not ye deluded by any maxims, by whatever authority they may be upheld, by whatever numbers they may be adopted, which are *after the rudiments of the world, and not after Chriſt.* Bewilder not yourſelf in a vain ſearch after rules of moral duty, amidſt calculations of endleſs conſequences, immediate, collateral, and remote. Forſake not the plain path of Scripture, to wander through inextricable mazes. Grope not in darkneſs, when the light ſhines before you. Labour not by ſpeculations concerning expediency, to diſcover that which is right: know, that whatever is commanded is expedient. Count not that conduct to be neceſſarily moral, which is deemed honourable among men. *That which is highly eſteemed among men, is abomination in the ſight of God (c).* Diſclaim the technical terms of falſe morality. Let your language reſpecting any moral or immoral proceeding be ſuch as unequivocally to prove that your reference is not to honour, but to conſcience, not to the traditions of men, but to the law of the Moſt High. *Follow not a multitude to do*

(c) Luke xvi. 5.

evil

evil (d). It is not cuſtom, but Scripture, that defines iniquity. *Wo unto them that call evil good (e)!* Be not partakers of their ſins. Reflect that the corrupting influence of falſe principles in morals does not terminate in morality. Relaxed opinions, as to the duties to be diſcharged towards your neighbour, and as to the government to be exerciſed over your appetites and paſſions, are relaxed ideas of duty to God, who has commanded you to love your neighbour as yourſelf, and to keep under your body, and bring it into ſubjection; and neceſſarily conduce to relaxed ideas on the ſubject of piety. If you remit your exertions to glorify God by keeping his moral commandments, your love for him is abated, your adoration of him is leſs reverential, your gratitude is leſs animated, your ſupplication is leſs fervent. If religion be weakened in one point, it is weakened in all points, it is endangered in all.

If then you are anxious, in diſcharging the duties of morality, faithfully to follow the divine commandments, and to tread in the ſteps of your Lord; *ſearch the Scriptures.* By them ſhall every moral deed be tried at laſt: by them let it be directed now. And, let not

(*d*) Exod. xxiii. 2. (*e*) Iſ. v. 20.

the criterion by which you judge be ſtudiouſly kept in the back-ground. Shall men of the world have their falſe principles conſtantly ready on their lips; and ſhall you be aſhamed modeſtly to avow yours? *Hold forth the word of life (f)*, by acting upon it, by acting confeſſedly upon it. The world will look to your morality, rather than to your piety. In that branch then of your religion, on which even irreligious men will occaſionally fix their eyes, be diligent *to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour (g)*. Let it be manifeſt, that *the grace of God which bringeth ſalvation* has taught you *to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world (h)*. Let the ſuperiority of your conduct evince the ſuperiority of your principle. As the conſcientious integrity, the ſelf-denying labours, the enlarged kindneſs, the indefatigable charity, of the early Chriſtians, excited the aſtoniſhment and drew forth the reluctant eulogiums of the Pagans: let the light of your Chriſtian morality ſo ſhine before the followers of erroneous maxims of conduct, that it may lead them to glorify your Father who is in heaven by a ſtrict adherence to the moral rules recorded in his holy word. Let it

(*f*) Philipp. ii. 16. (*g*) Tit. ii. 10. (*h*) Ib. 11, 12.

ſo

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(*d*) Exod. xxiii. 2. (*e*) Iſ. v. 20.

SERMON III.

On the CHANGES PRODUCED by the COMING of CHRIST, on the SITUATION of MEN, as to the DIVINE LAW.

MATTHEW, v. 17, 18.

Think not that I am come to deſtroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil. For verily I ſay unto you, till Heaven and Earth paſs, one Jot or one Tittle ſhall in no wiſe paſs from the Law, till all be fulfilled.

IN examining the word of God, that we may learn thoſe things which are eſſential to ſalvation, there are two rules which it behoves us punctually to obſerve. The firſt rule is, to *compare things ſpiritual with ſpiritual*; that is to ſay, not to be ſatisfied with conſidering ſome one paſſage relating to the particular ſubject upon which we are deſirous of information; but to conſult the various parts of Scripture, which treat of that ſubject; to bring together in one view the inſtruction which the different inſpired writers

furniſh concerning it; to interpret that poſition which may be conciſe or ſomewhat obſcure in one, by the larger and clearer explanations of another; and thus to avail ourſelves of the light which God has been pleaſed to throw, in the Old Teſtament and in the New, on the object of our inquiries. The ſecond rule is; to apply the declarations of Scripture to thoſe points only, to which Scripture authoriſes us to apply them; and conſequently to beware of raſhly transferring that deciſion, which the word of God pronounces concerning one branch of a ſubject, to ſome other branch of the ſame ſubject. It may probably have been for the purpoſe, among other reaſons, of exciting us to a continual and diligent ſearch of the ſacred writings, and of thus making us thoroughly acquainted with them, that the wiſdom of God has thought fit to diſperſe throughout many parts of the Bible paſſages, relating to the ſame doctrine, or to the ſame duty, inſtead of collecting them into one chapter or one book. The two rules, however, which have been recommended are evidently founded on ſolid reaſon; and are in fact of univerſal application and neceſſity. Take the writings of any uninſpired author, ancient or modern, for an example. Whatever may be the ſubject on

which he treats, is it likely that you will gain accurate knowledge of his ſentiments, if you content yourſelf with paying regard to ſome one paſſage only in which he mentions the ſubject? May it not eaſily happen that this paſſage, taken by itſelf, may lead you into error reſpecting his opinions and his meaning? If you would thoroughly underſtand him, if you would qualify yourſelf to turn to practical advantage the information which his book contains, concerning any topic on which it profeſſes to convey knowledge; muſt not you ſtudy and compare the obſervations upon that topic, which he delivers in different parts of his work? And muſt not you alſo be very careful not to miſapply the directions which he gives, by transferring them to ſome other branch of the ſubject to which he did not mean to apply them, and to which they do not belong? Take an additional example from converſation. Suppoſe a perſon to have held a long diſcourſe with you on ſome intereſting concern; and to have made known to you his opinion reſpecting it, by remarks diſperſed through various parts of that diſcourſe. Suppoſe that, by way of communicating his opinion to ſome of your friends, you were to tell them one or two detached ſentences or propoſitions which he had

had uttered; and were then to leave your hearers to form their conjectures as to his meaning, without knowing any thing which he had ſtated before, or any thing which he added afterwards? Is it not probable that you would lead them into groſs miſtakes, as to his real ſentiments? Or if you were unwarily to repreſent ſomething, which he affirmed or denied on one part of the queſtion, as having been intended by him to relate to another part; ſhould not you cauſe them to form very wrong concluſions? Of what conſequence then muſt it be, in ſeeking information from the word of God, ſcrupulouſly to follow theſe two rules which have been explained: firſt, to collect and compare the whole which the Scriptures contain reſpecting the ſubject of your enquiry; and ſecondly, not to transfer any judgement which the Scriptures pronounce concerning one branch of the ſubject, to other branches to which it does not pertain.

The neceſſity of bearing theſe rules in mind, and of faithfully applying them, is the more urgent, in proportion to the importance of the ſubject concerning which you are deſirous of obtaining knowledge; and to the diſcordance or incongruity which may appear to ſubſiſt between expreſſions relating to that

ſubject

ſubject in different parts of the Bible. Perhaps then there is ſcarcely any topic, with regard to which the neceſſity of obſerving theſe rules is more manifeſt than that, to which it is now propoſed to direct our thoughts; namely, the nature of the obligations under which Chriſtians are placed, with reſpect to the entire law of God, as delivered in the Old and the New Teſtaments. The ſubject, it will be confeſſed, is of main importance. For to act conformably to the obligation in queſtion, whatever that obligation may be, muſt be of eſſential influence as to our ſalvation. And it muſt alſo be admitted, that it is very poſſible to ſelect, from different parts of the Scriptures, expreſſions concerning the law, which when ſeparated from the context, and brought together and placed ſide by ſide without explanation, may eaſily ſeem to be diſcordant, if not irreconcilable. Thus in ſome paſſages we read, that *Chriſt has aboliſhed, in his fleſh the law of commandments contained in ordinances*—that *he has redeemed us from the curſe of the law*—that *we are to be juſtified by faith, without the deeds of the law*—that *the law is not made for a righteous man*—that *now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held*—that we are alſo become *dead to the law by the body*

of Chriſt—that *we are not under the law, but under grace (a)*. Yet at other times we hear the apoſtles declaring, that *the law is holy, and juſt, and good*—and that *without holineſs*, in other words without obedience to the law, *no man ſhall ſee the Lord*—that *ſin is the tranſgreſſion of the law*—that *to ſpeak evil one of another, is to ſpeak evil of the law, and to judge the law*—and that he who preſumes *to judge the law, is not a doer of the law*—that *whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all (b)*. We hear the great apoſtle of the Gentiles eagerly vindicating himſelf from the imputation of ſubverting the law: *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we eſtabliſh the law (c)*. We hear the deciſive words of our Lord: *think not that I am come to deſtroy the law or the prophets* (the prophets appear, from the following verſe, to be mentioned in this place, not ſo much on account of their having foretold future events, as of their having confirmed and illuſtrated the law); *think not that I am come to deſtroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil.*

(*a*) Epheſ. ii. 15. Gal. iii. 13. Rom. iii. 28. Gal. ii. 16. iii. 11. 1 Tim. i. 9. Rom vii 4, 6. vi. 14.

(*b*) Rom. vii. 12. Heb. xii. 14. 1 John, iii. 4. James, ii. 10. iv. 11.

(*c*) Rom. iii. 31.

For

For verily I ſay unto you, till heaven and earth paſs, one jot and one tittle ſhall in no wiſe paſs from the law till all be fulfilled. It is mainly owing to the neglect of applying to this ſubject the two rules which have been ſtated, that ſome perſons fall into extravagant deluſions, and others are involved in doubt and perplexity.

The law of God, as ſet before us in his holy word, conſiſts of two parts; the Ceremonial Law, and the Moral Law. Let us endeavour, under the bleſſing of God, diſtinctly to underſtand our ſituation reſpecting each.

I. The Ceremonial Law conſiſted of thoſe outward ordinances reſpecting the ſervice of the tabernacle, the wide variety of offerings and ſacrifices, the diſtinction of animals into clean and unclean, the forms to be obſerved for the attainment of legal purification, and many other rites of the ſame nature, which the Almighty enjoined to the Jews by Moſes. One of the objects of this law was, to keep the Jews apart from the corrupting ſociety of the heathen. But its grand purpoſe was, to direct the thoughts of the worſhippers to the promiſed Redeemer. Its typical ſacrifices, the blood of bulls and of goats, which could never take away ſin, pointed to the effectual atonement

atonement which he was to make, by the ſacrifice of himſelf upon the croſs. Its figurative purifications, which could never cleanſe the inward man, were emblems of that renewal of the heart, which was to be wrought by his Spirit. Its ſhadowy ceremonies and emblematical obſervances were continually repreſenting beforehand, ſometimes one part, ſometimes another, of his office, and of the benefits to be conveyed through him. The Ceremonial Law then was evidently limited as to its extent, and temporary in its nature: not intended to be binding on any nation, except the Jews; for to them only was it delivered, and at Jeruſalem only were many of its appointments to be celebrated: not deſigned to be of perpetual duration; for it was meant to prepare the way for a new diſpenſation, and conſequently, when that new diſpenſation ſhould be eſtabliſhed, was to ceaſe. It was a ſcaffolding eminently uſeful in the erection of the building; but when the ſtructure ſhould be completed, to be taken down. It was a ſchoolmaſter to bring the Jews, and through their means other nations, to Chriſt; but, when it had anſwered that purpoſe, to be diſmiſſed. Hence, our Lord, after his aſcenſion, pronounced by the mouth of his apoſtles the Ceremonial Law abolished:

aboliſhed: pronounced not only that it was not entitled to authority over the Gentile Chriſtians, but that it was no longer, in any reſpect, obligatory, even on the Jews. Hence, we hear St. Paul loudly exhorting his converts, not to ſubmit to any Judaizing teacher, who ſhould ſeek to impoſe its yoke upon them, but to ſtand faſt in the liberty with which Chriſt had made them free: not to regard its new moons, or its other ſeaſons of ceremonial convocation: not to imagine themſelves bound to obſerve its Sabbath, of the laſt day of the week, inſtead of the Chriſtian Sabbath of the firſt: not to allow others to judge them with reſpect to its abrogated ordinances, *touch not*, *taſte not*, *handle not*: not to conſider animals as ſtill diſtinguiſhed into clean and unclean; but without ſcruple to eat the fleſh of any animal fit for food, being aſſured that it is ſanctified by divine authority, to the uſe of man, when it is received with thankſgiving to God. And hence, not to enlarge farther on this ſubject, we hear him congratulating Chriſtians univerſally, that the Lord Jeſus had for ever relieved them from all its burthenſome inſtitutions: that he had *blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances that was againſt us, which was contrary to us, and had taken it out of the way, nailing it to his croſs*;

and

and there publicly expoſing it as an obſolete ſtatute, as a cancelled bond. But though our Redeemer thus aboliſhed the Ceremonial Law, he did not come to deſtroy it. He only permitted it to die, as by a natural death, at its appointed time. He did not allow it to come to its end, until he had fulfilled it. He came to fulfil it. And ſooner ſhould heaven and earth have paſſed away, than he would have ſuffered one jot, or one tittle, in any wiſe to paſs from the Ceremonial Law, till all were fulfilled. All its ſhadows he realiſed. All its types he exactly anſwered. All its prophetical alluſions he preciſely and perfectly accompliſhed. When he cried out, juſt as he was reſigning his breath, *It is finiſhed*; he referred to his having effected, among other objects of his manifeſtation in the fleſh, the fulfilment of the Ceremonial Law. Being thus fulfilled, having no longer any purpoſe to accompliſh or to promote; having its place ſupplied to Chriſtians by the two ſacraments, which he, who had fulfilled it, had ordained in its ſtead; it came to an end. In the moment when the Son of God gave up the ghoſt, it expired.

II. The Moral Law, which we are now to conſider, is a law under which we, no leſs than

than the Jews, are placed as ſubjects of the moral government of God. This law does not employ itſelf in preſcribing outward obſervances; but demands, under numerous precepts, univerſal holineſs of heart and life. Did our Lord, who came to fulfil the Ceremonial Law, come to deſtroy the Moral Law? He came to fulfil it in every particular; to ſatisfy, in the largeſt extent, every one of its demands. Did it require ſinleſs obedience? The Son of God in human nature obeyed it, in all points, unto perfection. In all points, tempted as we are, he was *without ſin*. Did it require that the ſpirituality of its nature, the vaſtneſs of its claims, the univerſality of its juriſdiction, circumſtances which were groſsly miſunderſtood, or ſhamefully diſregarded, ſhould be publicly diſplayed and recogniſed? The Son of God, as man, acknowledged, proclaimed, and eſtabliſhed them. In his ſermon from the Mount, and in every other part of his inſtructions, he ſhewed that not only every outward action, but that every deſire, every thought of the heart, muſt, in every particular, be ſubject and conformed to the Moral Law. Did it require to be magnified before men and angels, by ſome memorable proof, that for the breach of any one of its injunctions, complete ſatisfaction muſt be

be made, before pardon could be extended to the tranſgreſſor? In the preſence of men and angels the Son of God, as man, glorified it by giving up himſelf on Calvary, a ſpectacle to the whole creation, an atoning ſacrifice for the ſins of the whole world. It was to honour, to exalt, and to ſanction the Moral Law in all its bearings, in all its demands, that Jeſus Chriſt *though*, by nature, *in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God*; yet *made himſelf of no reputation, and took upon himſelf the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of men; and being found in faſhion as a man, humbled himſelf and became obedient into death, even the death of the croſs.*

Has there then been no change wrought by our bleſſed Lord in our ſituation, with reſpect to the Moral Law? Undoubtedly there has; and a change of inexpreſſible importance. Chriſt has delivered us *from the curſe*, from the condemning power *of the law*. He has purchaſed for us thoſe bleſſings which the law did not provide; which the law from its very nature could not provide; but for which it was intended, no leſs than the Ceremonial Law, to be a ſchoolmaſter to bring us to Him; pardon and reconciliation with God. A law knows nothing of forgiveneſs. How is it poſſible that

a law ſhould forgive? If a human law were to hold out pardon to thoſe who ſhould break it; would it be obeyed? If a ſtatute, made by our own Legiſlature, commanding certain duties to be performed, were to provide that perſons who ſhould diſobey the command ſhould not incur any penalty; would it be regarded? How is a law to conſtrain obedience, but by inflicting puniſhment on all who break it? How is a ſinful creature to be awed into obedience to a law, but by the conſciouſneſs that, if he diſobeys it, he ſhall be puniſhed? If forgiveneſs is ſought, it muſt be ſought from the free mercy of the lawgiver. In the law it is never to be found. The divine law, therefore, while it promiſes reward to thoſe who ſhould obey it in every point, proclaiming, *the man who doeth theſe things ſhall live by them (d)*; ſubjects to the penalty of eternal death, every perſon, who, in a ſingle particular, ſhould tranſgreſs. *Curſed is the man who continueth not in all things*, even in *all* things, *which are written in the book of the law to do them (e)*. To this penalty each of us has become obnoxious by numberleſs tranſgreſſions. The law knows not forgiveneſs. Even by a ſingle tranſgreſſion, ſalvation, ſo far as the law is concerned,

(*d*) Rom. x. 5. Gal. iii. 12. (*e*) Gal. iii. 10.

is

is irrecoverably forfeited and loſt. What hope of heaven could we retain, after our accumulated offences? It is here that the Lord Jeſus Chriſt of his free mercy interpoſes. Voluntarily undertaking, to ſatisfy the demands of the law upon us; bearing in his own body the puniſhment of our iniquities; he diſarms the law of its condemning power; he ſets us free from its graſp; he gives us repentance, and makes it availing; he ſaves us by his own merits; he makes us partakers of the recompenſe earned by his own righteouſneſs.

But though our Lord has thus taken away the condemning power of the Moral Law, has thus redeemed us from its curſe, by becoming a curſe, by ſubmitting to an accurſed death on the croſs for us: has he deprived the law of its authority, has he leſſened its juriſdiction, as a rule of life? God forbid! Moſt ignorant is that man of the purpoſe of his Redeemer's death, of the divine plan of redemption, who imagines that he is in any reſpect, or in the ſlighteſt degree, ſet looſe from the obligation of obedience to the Moral Law. The exhortations delivered in the New Teſtament teaching us, that we muſt labour to be holy, as God is holy, perfect as he is perfect; the ſolemn warnings, that to perſiſt in any one known ſin is to ſet

the whole law at defiance, and will aſſuredly exclude us from the kingdom of God; all the diſcourſes of our Saviour, and all the writings of his apoſtles, univerſally concur in proclaiming, that if there is *no condemnation to them that are in Chriſt Jeſus*, it is to them *who walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit (f)*. To them all paſt ſins are forgiven. For their daily infirmities, for their unallowed tranſgreſſions, for their ſins of ſurpriſe, for the corruptions over which they mourn, and againſt which they maintain an habitual conflict, the merits of their Redeemer ſhall atone. But are there perſons who call themſelves Chriſtians, and yet will not receive the law as an univerſal rule of life? Towards them its condemning power is undiminiſhed. On *them the wrath of God abideth*. Againſt them juſtice ſhall take its courſe. To thoſe who continue in ſin Chriſt will be no Saviour. Their penalty he diſcharges not. The law ſhall exact it to the uttermoſt in that everlaſting priſon, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth.

We are now, I truſt, prepared to underſtand the meaning, and to perceive the complete conſiſtency, of the various paſſages in Scripture, which ſpeak of the nature of our obligation to the law. The paſſages which

(f) Rom. viii. 1.

repreſent

repreſent the law as aboliſhed, or as in ſome meaſure deprived of its juriſdiction, relate either to the Ceremonial Law delivered to the Jews; or to the condemning power of the Moral Law with reſpect to true believers in Chriſt Jeſus, to Chriſtians whoſe faith habitually and perſeveringly proves itſelf by holineſs and good works. All the numerous paſſages, which deſcribe the law as entitled to reign over us, relate to its unimpaired and ſovereign authority over every man as a rule of life; and pronounce beyond the poſſibility of diſpute that, if we would enter into life, we muſt keep the commandments; that we muſt love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our ſoul, and with all our ſtrength, and our neighbour as ourſelf; and exerciſe ourſelves with unwearied diligence and earneſtneſs to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameleſs.

Make it then, my brethren, your frequent prayer that God would diſpoſe and enable you to feel warm and increaſing gratitude for the inconceivable mercy of Chriſt, in freely becoming man and dying on the croſs, that he might in your ſtead, and for your ſalvation, bear the curſe, and ſatisfy the penalty of the law. Compared with this deed of kindneſs,

with this inexpreſſible benefit; what are all the kindneſſes which can be ſhewn by men, what are all the benefits which you can receive from men? If it is right that you ſhould love your fellow creatures who love you: if it is right that you ſhould be grateful to thoſe who have conferred valuable favours upon you: how ought you to love the Son of God; what gratitude ought you to cheriſh towards Him, who died that you might be reſcued from the wrath to come, and live for ever in glory! Beware of being beguiled into the fatal perſuaſion, that you may continue in ſin that grace may abound. When Chriſt has died to purify unto himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works, is that man a Chriſtian who pretends that, becauſe Chriſt has paid the penalty of ſin, he may ſafely indulge in ſin, at leaſt in ſome one ſin; who turns the grace of our Saviour into a plea for working iniquity, for allowing himſelf in diſobedience? The wrath of God is ſtill *revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men.* Our God ſhall hereafter be *revealed in flaming fire, to take vengeance on thoſe who know not God, and obey not his Goſpel*; on thoſe who obey not that Moral Law, which a believer in Chriſt is, if it be poſſible, under ſtronger obligations than

than any perſon in former ages ever was faithfully to obey, becauſe in addition to every motive to obedience, which could reſt on perſons who lived before the birth of our Saviour, the Chriſtian is bound by the ties reſulting from the clearer views with which he is bleſſed of the nature and authority of the Moral Law, and by the obligations of love and gratitude for the redeeming mercies of his Lord. Seeing himſelf *bought with a price*, the price of Chriſt's blood; he is above all men bound to glorify God in holy obedience with his *body* and his *ſpirit which are God's*.

Laſtly: be not enſnared to turn the grace of God into licentiouſneſs by the language which is conſtantly meeting our ears, that our Saviour has mitigated the demands of the Moral Law, and will be ſatisfied with ſincere though imperfect obedience. Undoubtedly our obedience muſt be ſincere; and undoubtedly after our moſt faithful endeavours under divine grace, it will be grievouſly imperfect. In one ſenſe, therefore, it is true, that he who obeys ſincerely will be ſaved, though his obedience be imperfect. The language, however, which has been quoted, is ſometimes deſigned, and is always likely to bring men to conclude, that they need not to ſtrive to be holy in all points; but may feel

themſelves ſafe through Chriſt, if they take care to lead, on the whole, reſpectable lives. But if a man knowingly perſiſts in any one ſinful habit, is his obedience ſincere? Or has Chriſt mitigated the demands of the Moral Law? Has not he diſcloſed its extent, explained its purity, and enforced its authority, beyond all former ideas of men? If God demands the whole heart, is there any corner of it which may be reſerved for ſin? If, whatever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God, that God may in all things be glorified through Jeſus Chriſt; is there any breach of his law in which we may indulge? My brethren, be not deceived. If you are accuſtomed to ſpeak of being ſaved by ſincere, though imperfect, obedience; examine yourſelves whether you are not either truſting to be ſaved in part by the ſuppoſed merits of obedience, even of this imperfect obedience, or uſing ſuch language as a plea for the continuance of ſome unchriſtian practice, and the habitual neglect of ſome known duty. Look entirely to the croſs of Chriſt for atonement and acceptance. Renounce, reſiſt, every known ſin, if you hope to find him a Saviour.

SERMON IV.

JUSTIFICATION not attainable by ACTS of MORALITY.

ROMANS, iii. 28.

Therefore we conclude that a man is juſtified by Faith without the Deeds of the Law.

IN the minds of a very large proportion of the world a much higher degree of reſpect for morality prevails than for piety. Numbers who hold the diſpoſitions in which piety conſiſts, and the proceedings by which thoſe diſpoſitions are manifeſted, in low eſtimation, and perſonally are negligent of both, will be loud in the praiſes of moral virtue; and to a certain extent, and in ordinary circumſtances, are practically obſervant of various moral rules. Others, by whom the duties of piety are more juſtly appreciated, and are outwardly diſcharged with decent punctuality, diſcover by their common diſcourſe

courſe that morality poſſeſſes, in their eyes, ſuperior dignity and more winning attractions. The cauſes of this general partiality are not difficult to be traced. It is not merely nor principally that piety may be counterfeited by the hypocrite, while morality ſhews itſelf by its fruits. Morality may be counterfeit and hypocritical no leſs than piety. And piety, no leſs than morality, has her fruits to ſhew: and, if juſtice be rendered to her claims, will vindicate as excluſively her own productions, the very fruits with which morality is adorned. The main ſource of the preference is this: Men imagine their own intereſts to be more immediately involved in the general obſervance of morality than of piety. The duties of piety are conſidered as articles in a private account between the individual and his God: an account in which the world does not ſuppoſe itſelf ſpecifically intereſted, and in the ſtate of which it conſequently takes little concern. But on the influence of the moral rules of juſtice, ſincerity, veracity, on the diſcharge of relative duties, on the exerciſe of liberality and kindneſs, on the obſervance, at leaſt on the partial obſervance, of ſome of the precepts of temperance and purity, the world

perceives that in domeſtic life, in public tranſactions, in every matter of private buſineſs, its ſecurity and its comfort are dependent. Hence it is that morality is elevated to pre-eminence. Hence alſo it is that an unſound morality, a morality reſting on ſelfiſh motives, a morality not referring to God, is allowed to uſurp the honours due to Chriſtian morals, and to them only. Deriving from the ſelfiſh motives on which it reſts, inducements ſufficient to keep itſelf tolerably correct in cuſtomary caſes open to inſpection; it paſſes current with a world which looks to preſent effects, troubles not itſelf to inveſtigate motives, nor reflects that in morality not founded on the genuine corner-ſtone there will ultimately prove to be neither conſiſtency nor ſtrength.

Actions which, independently of conſiderations of religious duty, recommend themſelves to men by tried and conſtant utility, ſpeedily aſſume a character of merit. We begin to value ourſelves upon the performance of them. We proceed to infer that they muſt appear to God, who has commanded the performance of them, in the colours in which they appear to others and to ourſelves; and that, being pronounced meritorious by men, they entitle us to pre-

tenſions

tenſions of poſitive merit before Him; conſtitute, if not entirely, yet in part, the ground-work of our juſtification; and are authoriſed to claim from the Moſt High not merely acceptance through *grace*, but *reward as of debt* (*a*).

From this prevailing view of the nature of works of morality, and from the inherent reluctance of the unhumbled heart to admit that, if we are to be received as righteous before God, it muſt be altogether by means of other righteouſneſs than our own, has ariſen an opinion, the exiſtence of which among perſons whoſe thoughts have been turned to ſcriptural inquiries, may well be deemed ſurpriſing; namely, that when St. Paul affirms that men are *juſtified by faith without the deeds of the law*, the law which the Apoſtle intends is ſimply the Ceremonial law promulgated to the Jews by Moſes. "Faith," it is vaguely ſaid, "is the goſpel: "the law is the Moſaic ritual, with which "we have no concern. The Goſpel, in the "belief of which we are to be ſaved, requires "morality: and by the moral law, which "includes moral actions towards men, "though certainly without the deeds of the

(*a*) Rom. iv. 4.

"abrogated

" abrogated ceremonial law, we are to be " juſtified."

An opinion replete with confuſion and error, and at the ſame time relating to a ſubject ſo important as the place and office of Chriſtian morality in the plan of ſalvation, deſerves ſerious diſcuſſion.

The concluſion which, whatever be its import, St. Paul affirms in the text, is not an inſulated propoſition averred in that ſingle paſſage. In other parts of his Epiſtle to the Romans, and in the Epiſtle to the Galatians, it is again and again re-affirmed by him in various equivalent expreſſions; and is connected with laboured and diverſified trains of argument and illuſtration deſigned to eſtabliſh its truth, and to evince the importance which the Apoſtle attached to the concluſion in queſtion, and his ſolicitude that its validity ſhould be acknowledged and deeply felt. *Therefore by the deeds of the law there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in His ſight. Therefore being juſtified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, even we have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by the faith of Chriſt, and not by the works of the law: for by the*

works of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified. That no man is juſtified by the law in the ſight of God is evident: for the juſt ſhall live by faith. The law was our ſchoolmaſter to bring us unto Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by faith. Chriſt is become of no effect unto you, whoſoever of you are juſtified by the law; ye are fallen from grace: for we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteouſneſs by faith (*b*).

What is the Law, concerning which the Apoſtle in theſe paſſages has ſpoken?

Unqueſtionably the Ceremonial Law has been comprehended in them. That the Jews in the days of our Lord and of St. Paul looked for juſtification, ſome perhaps altogether, ſome chiefly, others in lower and different degrees, to the obſervances of that law, is certain. And it is equally certain, that by the Ceremonial Law juſtification was neither wholly nor in part attainable. The declarations of the word of God concerning its nature, and concerning the inherent inefficacy of its ſacrifices, prove that, had it been obeyed punctually and perfectly, it could not have juſtified. In the word of God it is pronounced to have been a ſyſtem of types and figures, intended to ſhadow

(*b*) Rom. iii. 20. v. 1. Gal. ii. 16. iii. 11, 24. v. 4, 5.

forth,

forth, and gradually to introduce, the appointed and only availing ſacrifice of Chriſt. *The law, having a ſhadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with thoſe ſacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. The firſt tabernacle was a figure for the time then preſent, in which were offered both gifts and ſacrifices that could not make him that did the ſervice perfect as pertaining to the conſcience: which ſtood only in meats and drinks, and divers waſhings and carnal ordinances impoſed on them until the time of reformation. For there is verily a diſannulling of the commandment going before for the weakneſs and unprofitableneſs thereof: for the law made nothing perfect. Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for ſin, thou wouldeſt not, neither hadſt pleaſure therein, which are offered by the law: then ſaid I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. Every prieſt ſtandeth daily miniſtering, and offering oftentimes the ſame ſacrifices, which can never take away ſins. For it is not poſſible that the blood of bulls and of goats ſhould take away ſins* (*c*). The perfect obſervance of the Ceremonial Law would have juſtified the Jew as to the obſervance of the ceremonies, but

(*c*) Heb. x. 1. ix. 8—10. vii. 18, 19. x. 4—11.

no

ſtill more pointedly to exclude the idea of a concurrent *juſtifying* power in any law, in any human work.

So alſo the aſſertion, that we are *juſtified by the blood of Chriſt* (*q*), in which blood it is faith that gives us an intereſt, apparently excludes the concurrence of other means.

But let us advance to poſitive proofs.

The Apoſtle, when inculcating in the third chapter of his Epiſtle to the Romans the doctrine of juſtification *by faith without the deeds of the law*, avowedly comprehends the Gentiles equally with the Jews. He maintains that the Jews are in *no wiſe better* than the Gentiles: *for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under ſin. Therefore by the deeds of the law there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in His ſight. But now the righteouſneſs of God* (the method of juſtification appointed by Him) *without the law is manifeſted, being witneſſed by the law and the prophets; even the righteouſneſs of God, which is by faith of Jeſus Chriſt unto all, and upon all them that believe*, (whether Jews or Gentiles,) *for there is no difference: for all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God: being juſtified freely by His grace through the*

(*q*) Rom. v. 9. and ſee Rom. iii. 25.

redemption

redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt, whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood. It is one God which ſhall juſtify the circumciſion by faith, and uncircumciſion through faith (*r*). Now the Gentiles never were ſubjected, nor deſigned to be ſubjected, to the Ceremonial Law. If therefore the Ceremonial Law only were intended by the Apoſtle; his reaſoning would be, as to the Gentiles, altogether irrelevant and nugatory. To the Moral Law they were ſubject; diſcerning *by the light of nature the things of the law, ſhewing the work of the law written in their hearts, their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs* (*s*). St. Paul's argument therefore, as comprehending the Moral Law, is perfectly relevant; but not otherwiſe.

In addition to the preceding obſervations let it be ſubjoined, that the tranſgreſſions of the Gentiles, as enumerated in the paſſage to which the Apoſtle alludes (*t*) when he ſtates himſelf to *have before proved the Gentiles to be under ſin*, are all of them breaches of the Moral Law.

Obſerve, in the next place, the reaſoning of St. Paul concerning the juſtifying faith of

(*r*) Rom. iii. 9, 20—25, 30. See alſo Rom. i. 16, 17.
(*s*) Rom. ii. 14, 15. See alſo Rom. i. 18. and ii. 26, 27.
(*t*) Rom. i. 28—32.

the patriarch Abraham. *By faith* he avers the Patriarch to have been *juſtified*; by faith, as contra-diſtinguiſhed from works, as oppoſed to works (*u*). Contra-diſtinguiſhed from what works? Oppoſed to what works? The works of the Ceremonial Law? No. The Ceremonial Law was not known until four hundred additional years had rolled away. Even the only rite of that future law, which, by anticipation, was enjoined to the Patriarch, was not enjoined to him until after the period when *faith was reckoned to him for righteouſneſs. He received the ſign of circumciſion, a ſeal of the righteouſneſs of the faith which he had yet being uncircumciſed.* What then are the works which the Apoſtle excludes from bearing a part in the juſtification of Abraham, but thoſe of the Moral Law? And what are the works but thoſe of the Moral Law which the Apoſtle excludes univerſally from bearing a part in the juſtification of men, when he proceeds to ſtate that all men, whether Jews or Gentiles, muſt be juſtified according to the pattern of the faith of the Father of the faithful?

In the next place, attend to the ſeveral characteriſtic marks, which St. Paul attributes to the law concerning which he ſpeaks.

(*u*) Rom. iv.

Hear

Hear him deſcribing this very law, of which he is affirming, *Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead*, (as to its condemning power over true believers,) *wherein we were held* (*w*); hear him immediately deſcribing this very law not only as *holy, juſt, and good* (*x*), terms much more applicable to a Moral than to a Ceremonial Law, but as *ſpiritual* (*y*); an epithet applicable only to a Moral Law.

Again: it is a law, by which is *the knowledge of ſin. By the deeds of the law there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in His ſight: for by the law is the knowledge of ſin* (*z*). Is this characteriſtic the more applicable to a Ceremonial or to a Moral Law? Is it here deſcriptive of the Ceremonial or of the Moral Law? The Apoſtle will anſwer theſe inquiries: *I had not known ſin but by the law: for I had not known luſt, except the law had ſaid, Thou ſhalt not covet* (*a*). Of what law is the commandment, *Thou ſhalt not covet*, a precept? The Apoſtle, by producing a precept of the Moral Law as a ſpecimen of the law concerning which he diſcourſes, demonſtrates that law to be the Moral Law.

Again;—if it can be needful to accumu-

(*w*) Rom. vii. 6. (*x*) Rom. vii. 12. (*y*) Rom. vii. 14.
(*z*) Rom. iii. 20. (*a*) Rom. vii. 7.

late farther proof, St. Paul, when reaſoning concerning the law which cannot juſtify, alludes, in more places than one, to *tranſgreſſions* of it (*b*). In another paſſage he exemplifies the nature of theſe tranſgreſſions—*throats that are open ſepulchres—tongues that have uſed deceit—lips under which is the poiſon of aſps—mouths full of curſing and bitterneſs—feet ſwift to ſhed blood* (*c*). Of which law, the Ceremonial or the Moral, are the deeds in queſtion tranſgreſſions?

Once more. The Apoſtle, ſtill deſcribing that law *by which it is evident that no man is juſtified*, pronounces, that *as many as are of the works of the law are under the curſe, for it is written, Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them* (*d*). Turn to the chapter (*e*) where the law has written its curſes, and mark who are the objects of them. The idolater: the man that ſetteth light by his father or his mother; he that removeth his neighbour's land-mark: he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way: he that perverteth the judgement of the ſtranger, the fatherleſs, and the widow;

(*b*) Rom. iv. 15. v. 13. (*c*) Rom. iii. 9—13, where it is to be obſerved, that St. Paul is ſpeaking both of Jews and Gentiles. (*d*) Gal. iii. 10. 11. (*e*) Deut xxvii. 15, 26.

he

he that is in any reſpect unchaſte: he that ſmiteth his neighbour ſecretly: he that taketh reward to ſlay the innocent. Are theſe Ceremonial offences? Is the law, which denounces its curſe againſt them, the Ceremonial Law?

On the whole then, need we to heſitate in affirming that St. Paul, when labouring to eſtabliſh the grand principle of the Goſpel, that a man is juſtified only by faith in the atoning blood of Chriſt without the deeds of the law; had principally in view not the Ceremonial but the Moral Law? He had the Ceremonial Law avowedly in contemplation; becauſe by it the Jews ſought to be juſtified. He had the Moral Law principally before him; becauſe in every age the natural pride of the human heart, and miſtakes reſpecting ſcriptural doctrine, would concur in impelling men, whether of Jewiſh or of Gentile ſtock, to truſt, altogether or in part, to their moral works for juſtification before God.

Conſider whether this concluſion, at which we have at length arrived, is not one which muſt approve itſelf to every unprejudiced mind. Is it poſſible that we can be juſtified by the Moral Law? Its language reſpecting juſtification is, *The man which doeth theſe*

things ſhall live by them (*f*). Have we done them? Have we not tranſgreſſed the law times without number? Are not we in ſome point continually offending againſt it? And can we be juſtified by a law which we have broken? Perhaps you ſay, "In various "points we have kept the law." Be the fact allowed. Of what avail is it as to juſtification under the law? The law juſtifies or condemns: pronounces innocent or guilty. Can it pronounce a man innocent who has broken it? *Curſed* is the man who continueth not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to do them. Is not the caſe the ſame under human laws? He who tranſgreſſes againſt a ſingle ſtatute of the land is condemned and puniſhed by his country as a bad ſubject. In tranſgreſſing againſt that ſtatute he *is guilty*, in the language of St. James, *of all*; guilty of tranſgreſſing againſt the authority of the whole law, and of the legiſlature. He who offends in a ſingle point againſt the Moral Law of God, ſins againſt the authority of the whole law, and of God, who commands the obſervance of the whole. Can ſuch a man, can any man, be juſtified by the law? *The law worketh wrath. For all have ſinned,*

(*f*) Rom. x. 5. Gal. iii. 12.

and

and come ſhort of the Glory of God (*g*). Nay, even if we were to look for ſalvation to ſingle actions; if we might ſuppoſe our tranſgreſſions put aſide, and heaven ſuſpended as the reward of one deed perfectly anſwering the demands of the Moral Law; where ſhould the deed be found? "Was the "motive perfectly pure in all points, imme-"diate and remote? In the progreſs from "the motive to the execution, did no tinge "of evil inſinuate itſelf? In the execution "itſelf, did no feeling of wrong temper, no "emotion of diſcontent, of pride, or of "vanity, ariſe? Didſt thou perform the "deed as ſoon as thou oughteſt to have "done? Didſt thou perform it as cheer-"fully? Didſt thou perform it as well as "thou wert able; and as well as, by a fit "uſe of the means of knowing My will, "thou mighteſt have been able? Didſt thou "pray as fervently as became thee for grace "to act in this inſtance aright?"—What human deed could ſtand the ſcrutiny? What human deed can *have whereof to glory before God*, can claim reward *not of grace but of debt* (*h*)? Where is the hope of juſtification by the Moral Law of God? Where is the hope of juſtification by morality?

(*g*) Rom. iii. 23. iv. 15. (*h*) Rom. iv. 2, 4.

Behold

Behold alſo, under a variety and an apparent diſcordance of expreſſion, the conſiſtent harmony of the ſcriptural doctrine concerning juſtification. The procuring cauſe of our juſtification is the atoning blood of Chriſt. At one time therefore it is ſaid, that we are *juſtified by His blood* (*i*): at another, with a ſimilar meaning, that we are *juſtified in the name of the Lord Jeſus* (*k*). The inſtrument by which excluſively an intereſt in that blood can be obtained, is faith. Hence it is ſo frequently declared, either ſimply, that we are *juſtified by faith*; or with additional terms more pointedly ſhutting out the concurrence of works either of the Ceremonial or of the Moral Law. As the entire plan of ſalvation by faith in the blood of a Redeemer is a diſpenſation of wholly unmerited mercy: we are alſo deſcribed as *juſtified freely, juſtified by grace* (*l*). As there aroſe perſons who, neglecting St. Paul's definition of juſtifying faith, that it is a *faith which worketh by love* (*m*), ſuppoſed or pretended that a barren faith, a ſpeculative and unproductive aſſent of the underſtanding, ſufficed for juſtification: St. James, with equal wiſ-

(*i*) Rom. v. 9. (*k*) 1 Cor. vi. 11.
(*l*) Rom. iii. 24. Tit. iii. 7. (*m*) Gal. v. 6.

dom

dom and energy, maintains that *faith which has not works cannot ſave*; that *faith without works is dead, being alone*; that *a man is juſtified by works, and not by faith only* (*n*), by faith, which is alone: maintains, not that works can poſſeſs any juſtifying merit, (for ſuch a poſition would have been irreconcileable not merely with every part of St. Paul's reaſoning, but with the great doctrine of juſtification only through the blood of a Redeemer,) but that a faith which does not prove itſelf to be genuine by works is not the faith which juſtifies.

For let it ever be carefully borne in mind, that, when the inefficacy of works has been here ſet forth, and eſtabliſhed on ſcriptural authority, it has been their inefficacy as to *juſtification*: their utter incompetency to produce any claim of merit before God, to abide the ſcrutiny of His law, to countervail a ſingle tranſgreſſion, to remove guilt, to confer righteouſneſs. But are not good works eſſential to ſalvation? Eſſential! Altogether indiſpenſable: indiſpenſable as though they were to juſtify. Since they cannot contribute to juſtification, it is as evidences and fruits of faith that they are important. But as ſuch they are ſo important, that without

(*n*) James, ii. 14, 17, 20, 24.

them

them no man ſhall ſee the Lord. Are good works then *conditions* of ſalvation? This conteſted term is objectionable or irreprehenſible according to the ſenſe in which it is employed. If it be intended, that good works are a *meritorious* condition of ſalvation; the meaning is totally unchriſtian. If the ſenſe be, that they are an *indiſpenſable* condition; it is ſcripturally correct. The difference is manifeſt. Were a condemned criminal aſſured by his judge, that, on coming forthwith to the judge's door, he ſhould receive a free pardon and a noble donation: his attendance at the appointed place would be an *indiſpenſable* condition, but not a *meritorious* cauſe, of obtaining the promiſed benefits. Be ye *rich in good works.* Though they can do nothing towards the *purchaſe* of ſalvation; as qualifications to make us meet for receiving the gift of it, they are indiſpenſable. Expect not from them juſtification, which is not within their ſcope. But by them, as a tree by its fruits, ſhall a living faith be known. Every one of them is *a ſacrifice acceptable, well-pleaſing to God.* According to the meaſure of them, ſhall be the gracious recompenſe of the righteous. Not one of them ſhall loſe its reward. Be diligent in them, be conſiſtent in them, be perſevering

perſevering in them, for the ſake and to the glory of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt: and thus lay up for yourſelves, through His merits, a more and more abundant treaſure in heaven.

SERMON V.

On LIVING after the FLESH, or after the SPIRIT.

ROMANS, viii. 13, 14.

For, if ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall die. But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.

IF one of your children, my brethren, arrived at years of diſcretion, was about to be placed in ſome worldly ſituation, by which he was to gain his livelihood; there would be ſome points, material to his future ſucceſs, concerning which you would feel deſirous of being ſatisfied. You would aſk; Is there a fair proſpect, that if he ſhall be diligent, and in other reſpects ſhall conduct himſelf properly, he will ſucceed? Suppoſe yourſelf convinced that, on his diligence and good behaviour, his ſucceſs might be regarded as certain. You would then perhaps enquire,

whether the method of conducting his buſineſs aright is eaſy to be known. Suppoſe yourſelf fully aſſured that it is. You would probably aſk in the next place, whether ſucceſs will bring with it advantages ſufficiently great to compenſate the labour and the anxiety neceſſary to obtain ſucceſs. Suppoſe yourſelf to have complete proof, that the advantages would abundantly repay all the trouble, of every kind, which may be needful in order to acquire them. You would now confeſs that entire ſatisfaction has been given to you; that it would be altogether unreaſonable to expect any thing more. But what if a by-ſtander were to ſay to you: "All that "you have heard is true. You muſt, however, remember, that if your ſon ſhould "turn out idle, and unprincipled, he will not "ſucceed in his buſineſs, and will undoubtedly bring upon himſelf ſhame and diſtreſs." You would anſwer: "In that caſe he will "deſerve them. If the way to ſucceſs is "plainly pointed out to him; if ſucceſs may "be deemed certain, provided that he will "follow this plain way; and if the recompenſe which he will gain is much more "than a ſufficient return for his exertions: "what more can be deſired? If with ſuch "proſpects he ſhall wilfully take the road to "ruin,

" ruin, he will have no right to complain of " the conſequences."

Now turn your eyes to the text; and apply to your own ſituation, your own proſpects, your own conduct, the reaſoning which you have perceived, I apprehend, to be juſt in the caſe that has been repreſented concerning one of your children. St. Paul here brings before you the nature of that condition, in which you are placed upon earth, that you may obtain an inheritance of happineſs in the world to come. He declares to you the way which you muſt follow, if you would ſucceed in your purſuit of eternal glory; the certainty of ſucceſs, if you will faithfully perſevere in the appointed road; and the vaſtneſs of the reward prepared for the ſervants of God. At the ſame time the apoſtle diſtinctly ſhews to you the path of deſtruction; and the unavoidable and overwhelming miſeries, which await all who purſue it.

Let us conſider, with devout ſupplication for the guidance of divine grace, the ſeveral parts of the text in the order in which they ſtand.

'I. *If ye live after the fleſh ye ſhall die.* A momentous declaration, ſimple, awful,

and alarming! What is the courſe of action which it ſpecifies? What is the conſequence which it denounces?

By *the fleſh* is unqueſtionably to be underſtood that corrupt nature, which all the poſterity of fallen Adam derive from him: a nature, in itſelf, prone to ſin, averſe from holineſs, helpleſs againſt temptation. What this nature is, appears by the fruits which it bears; in other words, by the works which it produces. And *the works of the fleſh are manifeſt; uncleanneſs* of every kind, *idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies, envyings, murders, drunkenneſs, revellings, and ſuch like* (*a.*) Such is the nature which deſcends from generation to generation. *That which is born of the fleſh is fleſh* (*b*). The deſcendents of corrupt parents muſt be in their nature corrupt. In our fleſh *dwelleth no good thing*. To live after the fleſh is to *fulfil the deſires of the fleſh* (*c*): to purſue thoſe evil courſes, to which of ourſelves we are diſpoſed: to obey the ſuggeſtions of *the carnal mind*, which *is enmity againſt God* (*d.*) Let it be carefully obſerved how very large a proportion of the iniquities enumerated by St. Paul, as inſtances and ſpecimens of the *works of the fleſh*, are not only offences againſt

(*a*) Gal. v. 19—21. (*b*) John, iii. 6. (*c*) Epheſ. ii. 3. (*d*) Rom. viii. 6, 7.

God,

God, but alſo tranſgreſſions with reſpect to men; not only violations of piety, but alſo breaches of Morality. Being by nature deſtitute of love to God, we are of courſe devoid of any natural diſpoſition, either to controul our appetites, or to love our neighbour, for the ſake of God. Every deed of immorality is natural to us; is a *work of the fleſh*; is a portion of *the carnal mind*, which *is enmity againſt God* (*d*); is a part of that natural train of diſpoſitions and proceedings, with a reference to which is recorded the ſolemn warning: *If ye live after the fleſh ye ſhall die.* Of ſuch a life the conſequence is death. *If ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall die.* So alſo ſpeaks the apoſtle in the preceding verſe: *To be carnally minded is death.* Now what is intended in theſe paſſages by death? Not merely the loſs of this mortal life, the ſeparation of the ſoul from the body. For this death all men experience. *There is one event* in this reſpect *to the righteous and to the wicked* (*e*). What more then is comprehended; for it is evident that ſomething more is comprehended, in the death which awaits thoſe who live after the fleſh? Let St. Paul explain his own meaning. After having mentioned, in the paſſage which has been quoted from his epiſtle to the Galatians,

(*d*) Rom. viii. 6, 7. (*e*) Eccleſ. ix. 2.

the

the principal works of the fleſh, he adds this aweful declaration: *Of which I tell you before*, concerning which deeds I now appriſe you beforehand, *as I have alſo told you in time paſt, that they who do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God* (*f*). Thoſe who do not inherit the kingdom of God, ſhall be condemned for ever to the place of puniſhment, which is prepared for the devil and his angels. Here then is the death of which St. Paul ſpeaks in the text, as remaining for thoſe who in this world live after the fleſh; namely, *the lake of fire*, which *is the ſecond death* (*g*). For them is reſerved, after the concluſion of the preſent life, the everlaſting deſtruction of body and ſoul in hell.

II. From this ſecond death, however, this death eternal, deliverance is ſecured to thoſe who *put off the body of the ſins of the fleſh* (*h*). Hear the promiſe graciouſly extended to you on the part of God. *If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live.*

What is it to *mortify the deeds of the body?* It is to act in ſtedfaſt oppoſition to the corrupt inclinations of your nature; to abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul; to bring your evil deſires into ſubjection to

(*f*) Gal. v. 21. (*g*) Rev. xx. 14. (*h*) Col. iii. 11.

the law of Chriſt; to labour not only to withſtand their influence, but practically to root them out of your boſom.

But how is this victory over nature to be won? Can we change our own hearts? Can we cauſe ourſelves to hate the ſinful purſuits, on which our affections are fixed? Can we make ourſelves, as it were, afreſh, into new creatures; into beings wholly different in wiſhes, principles, and conduct? It is impoſſible. What then is to be done? Are we to ſit down in deſpair? No. *That which is impoſſible with men, is poſſible with God.* The means of ſucceſs are made known to us, and placed within our reach. We are to mortify the deeds of the body *through the Spirit.*

Of all that is good in fallen man, the Holy Spirit of God is the author. By the ſufferings of our Redeemer, the grace of the Spirit has been purchaſed for every one of us. That Holy Spirit is able, and He offers, to create us afreſh in Chriſt Jeſus; to create a clean heart and renew a right ſpirit within us. If we commit ourſelves to His guidance in humility and ſingleneſs of heart, he will ſet us free from the bondage of ſin. He will enlighten our underſtandings to diſcern the wretchedneſs of our natural ſtate; the greatneſs of the guilt which we have contracted; the hopeleſſneſs of every attempt which we

can make to atone by our own works for paſt iniquities, or to walk by our own ſtrength according to the divine commandments for the time to come; and the neceſſity of flying for ſalvation to the only deliverer, the Son of God, who died for us upon the croſs. The ſame Spirit will alſo exerciſe his transforming power over our hearts. He will change their original bent and inclinations. He will cauſe us to abhor evil; to abhor it becauſe it is evil; to hate the ſinful deeds in which we formerly delighted; to act upon new principles; to ſet our affections on new objects; to be zealous in new purſuits. For the Holy Spirit of God, if we reſiſt him not, will not leave his work imperfect. And imperfect indeed would it be, if we could ſuppoſe that his influence, after it had expelled the love of ſin from the heart, would ſtop ſhort without planting there the love of righteouſneſs; after it had purified the outward conduct from poſitive tranſgreſſion, would not lead the man forward to activity in good works. The Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit, *the Spirit of holineſs*. His aim, his purpoſe, is to make us holy. *The fruit of the Spirit, is in all goodneſs, righteouſneſs, truth, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, faith, meekneſs, temperance* (*i*). *The wiſdom from*

(*i*) Gal. v. 22, 23. Eph. v. 9.

above, which he giveth, *is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſy* (*k*). Remark now, while you contemplate this catalogue of the fruits of the Spirit, the ample ſpace occupied by thoſe duties which belong to the claſs of morals. Remark that, as every immoral action is natural to man, is one of *the fruits of the fleſh*; ſo every act of morality, of real morality, of morality including the motive as well as the deed, of morality having a reference to God, is and muſt be a *fruit of the Spirit*. In theſe fruits of Chriſtian morality, no leſs than in thoſe of piety, whoſoever is ſanctified by the Spirit will ſtrive to abound more and more. Whoſoever is ſanctified by the Spirit will be earneſt and diligent to glorify God by faithful obedience, even as wicked men are to commit ſin. He will be as zealous to keep his body, and bring it into ſubjection, as they are to gratify every ſenſual deſire; he will ſtudy to love his neighbour as watchfully as they ſeek ſelfiſh advantages. He will labour as anxiouſly for the Spirit, as they labour for the fleſh. Having no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs, having his conſcience purged from dead works to ſerve the

(*k*) James, iii. 17.

living

living God: he will work the works of God, he will ſhew forth the work of faith, and the labour of love, no leſs than the patience of hope.

The hope of thoſe who are governed by the Spirit, is a *hope* which *maketh not aſhamed.* For what is the word of promiſe? *If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live.* What is the life here intended? Is it merely the prolongation of exiſtence into another ſtate of being? That prolongation is common to the righteous and the wicked. Is it ſimply the reſtoration of the body from the grave? In that reſtoration the wicked ſhall partake. What then does the life promiſed to thoſe who live after the Spirit imply? It implies in the firſt place, pardon of ſin, deliverance from hell. *There is no condemnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit* (*l*). But farther, it compriſes *glory, honour, immortality*, as branches of *eternal life* (*m*). The future life in reſerve for the wicked is a portion of *the ſecond death.* He who in the preſent world has walked in the Spirit, he, who has had his fruits unto holineſs, ſhall find the end to be life, even bleſſedneſs, everlaſting. *He ſhall not come into con-*

(*l*) Rom. viii. 1. (*m*) Rom. ii. 7.

demnation, but is paſſed from death unto life (*n*). He ſhall become a partaker of that kingdom where there is no more death. In the preſence of that Redeemer who has declared, *Whoſoever believeth in me ſhall never die* (*o*); of that Redeemer who has not only deſtroyed the power of death, but has paſſed the ſentence of deſtruction upon death itſelf; he ſhall live world without end. Ranſomed from the grave, raiſed at the laſt day, his corruptible ſhall put on incorruption; his mortal ſhall put on immortality. Then can he die no more, for he is made equal unto the angels. And his life ſhall be everlaſting bliſs. In the realms to which he is exalted, not only is there no death, but neither is there crying nor pain; for the former things are paſſed away. He ſtands throughout eternity before God, in whoſe preſence is fulneſs of joy, and at whoſe right hand are pleaſures for evermore.

III. But whence is it that ſuch a bleſſed hope is in ſtore for the followers of righteouſneſs, againſt the appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt? Whence is it that glories ſo far ſurpaſſing the imagination of man, ſhall be poured forth through-

(*n*) John, v. 24. (*o*) John, xi. 25, 26.

out

out endleſs ages, upon the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect? The apoſtle explains the reaſon. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.* Such are the riches of the mercy of God, the Father, to all who are ſanctified unto obedience by his Spirit; that he regards them as his own children, as brethren of his beloved Son, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; and for his ſake admits them to enter into the fulneſs of the joy of their Lord.

They who are *led by the Spirit*, are *born of the Spirit* (*p*). They who are born of the Spirit, are *born of God* (*q*). They have *received the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry unto God, abba, Father. The Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with their Spirit, that they are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Chriſt* (*r*). The Lord Jeſus himſelf is *not aſhamed to call them brethren* (*s*). His concluding prayer for them to his heavenly Father, before he ſuffered, was; *Father, I will that they alſo whom thou haſt given me be with me where I am* (*t*). It is by him that every bleſſing which awaits them has been purchaſed and prepared. It is

(*p*) John, iii. 5. (*q*) 1 John, iii. 1, 9. (*r*) Rom. viii. 15—17. (*s*) Hebr. ii. 11. (*t*) John, xvii. 24.

by

by him that the enjoyment of each of thoſe bleſſings will be conferred upon them. Becauſe, having been led by his Spirit, they are adopted as his brethren, he ſhall put them into complete poſſeſſion of that glory, which, as Lord of the univerſe, in his human nature, he enjoys. Not only ſhall they be in a ſtate of happineſs, but they *ſhall be for ever with him* (*u*). Not only ſhall they be for ever with him, but they *ſhall be like him*; *for they ſhall ſee him as he is* (*v*). Not only ſhall their *vile body* be rendered incorruptible, incapable of pain, qualified for happineſs beyond our preſent comprehenſion; but Chriſt ſhall *change it ſo that it ſhall be faſhioned like unto his own glorious body*, according to *the working whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things to himſelf* (*w*). Not only ſhall their ſouls be bleſſed with knowledge of God, of his ways, of his works, to an extent which is at preſent inconceivable; but their faculties ſhall be ſo exalted as to reſemble thoſe of their glorified Redeemer. The ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, *ſhall know even as they are known* (*x*). Not only ſhall they be eſtabliſhed in bliſs, ſurpaſſing the moſt ardent hopes on which the imagination can dwell;

(*u*) 1 Theſ. iv. 17. (*v*) 1 John. iii, 2. (*w*) Philipp. iii. 21. (*x*) 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

but the height of glory to which they ſhall be raiſed ſhall be of the ſame nature with that which belongs to the incarnate Son of the Moſt High. *To him*, ſaith our Lord, *that overcometh will I grant to ſit with me on my throne; even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with my Father on his throne* (*y*). Thus eminently ſhall the righteous be recogniſed as the Sons of God!

You perceive, my brethren, that it is only *through the Spirit of God*, that you can be enabled to mortify the deeds of the body, to attain to living faith, and to work the works of Chriſtian morality: only through him that you can eſcape eternal death, and gain poſſeſſion of life everlaſting. If *they* then *that are in the fleſh cannot pleaſe God*: if the proof that *ye are not in the fleſh, but in the Spirit*, be this, that *the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*: if any man, who *has not the Spirit of Chriſt, is none of his* (*z*): how deſervedly is that Holy Spirit pronounced in the Liturgy of our church, to be "the Lord and Giver "of life!"

Are you deſirous to learn whether you are living to the Spirit? *Examine yourſelf whether you be in the faith. Prove your ownſelf*, whether your belief in the doctrine of the Lord Jeſus

(*y*) Rev. iii. 21. (*z*) Rom. viii. 8, 9.

Chriſt,

Chriſt, your love and gratitude and humility towards your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, be ſuch as become the Goſpel. Examine yourſelf, prove yourſelf, whether your life be moral. If it be in any point wilfully immoral, you are living not after the Spirit, but after the fleſh. And if you perſiſt in thus living after the fleſh, you ſhall die. If your conduct be moral, is it from the heart? Is it from prudence, or from conſcience? Is it for the ſake of man, or of God? If your morality, literally accurate as it may be, is not the effect of *faith which worketh by love*; it is not after the Spirit, but after the fleſh. It is not Chriſtian morality. In the ſight of God it is not morality.

Are you anxious that the Holy Spirit ſhould lead you to eternal life? Follow three plain directions preſſed upon you in the Scriptures, and your deſires ſhall be accompliſhed.

Firſt: ſeek for the grace of the Holy Spirit by ſuitable prayer in the name of Chriſt. *Whatſoever ye ſhall aſk the Father in my name, he will give it you. Aſk, and ye ſhall have: ſeek, and ye ſhall find: knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit*

Spirit to them that aſk him (a)? Obſerve now that theſe expreſſions deſcribe earneſt and perſevering prayer. They do not in any reſpect accord with lukewarm or ſhort-lived ſupplications. They teach you that, if you would obtain the gift of the Holy Spirit, you muſt firſt become ſenſible how greatly you ſtand in need of it; for otherwiſe you will not pray for it with fervency: and how continually you ſtand in need of it; for otherwiſe you will not pray for it with conſtancy.

Secondly: ſtrive always to act up to the meaſure of the grace which you have received. *To him that hath*, to him who has faithfully endeavoured to live, according to the helps with which it has pleaſed God to furniſh him, *more ſhall be given, and he ſhall have abundance. But from him who hath not, even that which he hath ſhall be taken away (b).* Cheriſh then the good deſires which riſe in your mind; for it is by the Holy Spirit that they are planted there. Keep ſtedfaſt to the religious reſolutions which you have formed; for it is the Holy Spirit who has inclined you to form them. Carry them promptly and heartily into execution; for it is by the Holy Ghoſt that you are enabled not only *to*

(*a*) John, xvi. 23. Matth. vii. 7. Luke, xi. 13.
(*b*) Matth. xxv. 29.

will

will, but *to do*. Study the Scriptures regularly and devoutly; for the *holy men of old* who wrote them, wrote *as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt*. Be diligent, be ſincerely pious, in attendance on all the outward ordinances of religion; for through them the Holy Ghoſt diſpenſes his grace. Receive with a willing mind the inſtructions, public or private, of the miniſters of the Goſpel; for, at the peril of their own ſouls, they are to feed and to watch over *the flock, over which the Holy Ghoſt has made them overſeers.*

Laſtly: *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God* (*c*), by returning to ſins which you have forſaken; or by allowing yourſelf to proceed in any new courſe of iniquity. Knowingly to continue in any habit of tranſgreſſion is to forſake the Holy Ghoſt. It is not only to refuſe to obey the influence of the good Spirit of God: it is to follow the guidance of the evil ſpirit, the adverſary of God, the devil. It is to provoke the Holy Ghoſt to depart from you; to caſt you off; to abandon you to yourſelf, and to the dominion of the powers of darkneſs. Keep then your heart diligently, that neither wrath, nor envy, nor hatred, nor impurity, nor covetouſneſs, nor deceit, nor diſcontent, nor pride, nor worldly

(*c*) Epheſ. iv. 30.

anxiouſneſs,

anxiouſneſs, nor any other unchriſtian diſpoſition, may harbour there. Review from time to time your outward conduct, that you may diſcover whether you are indulging any practice unbecoming a ſervant of the Lord Jeſus. Endeavour day by day to grow in grace; to gain more and more the maſtery, through the Holy Spirit, over your remaining corruption. Then will he preſerve you under his care. He will advance you in ſpiritual underſtanding, in ſpiritual ſtrength, in ſaving faith, in moral attainments. He will make you more and more meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the ſaints in light, and will ſeal you unto the day of redemption.

SERMON VI.

The LOVE of GOD with the whole HEART an INDUCEMENT to ſtrict MORALITY.

MATTHEW, xxii. 37.

Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.

IN the time of our Saviour's miniſtry, many of the Jews appear to have imagined that ſome of the commandments of God were in their nature of much higher excellence than others: that the obſervance of theſe was of much greater conſequence, was much more acceptable, than the obſervance of others: nay, ſo important, ſo acceptable, that ſtrict obedience even to one of theſe principal commandments would excuſe the neglect of the remainder, and prove ſufficient for the attainment of ſalvation. A teacher of the Jewiſh law, whoſe attention had

had been raiſed by the wiſdom of our Lord's diſcourſes, partly from a deſire to prove the depth of that wiſdom, and partly for his own inſtruction, propoſed this queſtion: *Maſter, which is the great commandment in the law?* As though he had ſaid; "Upon this point, "our eminent Rabbis are not agreed. Some "are of opinion, that the commandments "which relate to the offering of ſacrifices "are entitled to the higheſt rank. Others "give this honour to other command-"ments. What ſayeſt thou? Which "commandment doſt thou conſider as the "chief of all the commandments?" Our Saviour, referring him to the words of Moſes, which, if well conſidered, might have prevented the enquiry *(a)*, replied; *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind. This is the firſt and great commandment.*

If this be the firſt and great commandment, to underſtand it, and to obey it, muſt be of the firſt and greateſt conſequence. For this purpoſe then let us humbly enquire into its meaning.

I. Conſider who it is, whom the commandment requires us to love. It is the

(a) Deut. vi. 5.

Lord our God. It is the great and glorious Jehovah, who inhabiteth eternity, whoſe name is Holy. Why are we to love Him? We are to love Him, becauſe he is beyond expreſſion worthy of our love. He poſſeſſes, in unbounded perfection, every quality which is deſerving of love. His goodneſs is infinite. His truth is unchangeable. His mercy is over all His works. We are to love Him, *becauſe He firſt loved us (b)*. He created us; created us of His own free will; created us that we might be happy; that we might be happy for ever; that we might be for ever happy to ſuch a degree as the mind of man is not at preſent able to conceive. In Him we live and move and have our being. He ſupports, by his protecting care, the exiſtence which he gave. He upholds us, and all things, by the word of His power. He is always preſent with us, to guard us both from temporal and from ſpiritual evil. We are to love Him, becauſe, having firſt loved us, He forgiveth all our ſins, and healeth all our iniquities. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveneſſes, though we have rebelled againſt Him. He has ſo loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in Him ſhould not periſh, but

(*b*) 1 John, iv. 19.

ſhould

ſhould have everlaſting life. The Son, One from the beginning with the Father and the Holy Spirit, took our nature upon Him; gave himſelf up to be wounded for our tranſgreſſions, to be bruiſed for our iniquities; humbled Himſelf unto death, to death by a mode of dying ſingularly painful and ignominious, as a ranſom for us. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Chriſt laid down His life for his enemies. How wonderfully in this tranſaction was manifeſted the love of God! Not only is the penalty of guilt removed from all, who ſhall fly for refuge to the Almighty Saviour: but the penitent ſhall be treated as a Son who never had offended. He ſhall be reſtored to the fulneſs of his heavenly Father's favor: ſhall be filled by the Holy Ghoſt, the Sanctifier and the Comforter, with grace and ſtrength and joy: ſhall be ſupported from above in life and in death: ſhall receive back from the grave his body, no longer corruptible, but arrayed in glory: ſhall dwell in heaven for ever. Such then is the Lord our God whom we are to love, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, our Creator, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, our rock of defence, our

light, our hope, our conſolation, our exceeding great reward.

II. The commandment, in the next place, declares the meaſure of love which we owe to the Lord our God. Thou ſhalt *love Him with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind*; with all the faculties, powers, and exertions of the body, and of the ſoul. The words of the commandment are ſo forcible, and ſo comprehenſive, that it is difficult to add to them in the way of explanation, without weakening and narrowing their meaning. They include every thing. They require every manifeſtation of love, which, at any time, and in any manner, we can render to the Lord our God.

Do they then require too much? Are you tempted to think them ſomewhat unreaſonable in their demand? While you allow that a large return of love is due from you to God; are you ſecretly diſpoſed to ſay that a ſomewhat lower degree of love to Him than that which the text deſcribes would have ſatisfied the claim? Conſider well with yourſelves. Look to your hearts, your bodies, your ſouls, your underſtandings, your poſſeſſions. Point out the faculty, the power, the attainment, the article of property, the poſſeſſion, for which you do not ſtand indebted

debted to the free goodneſs of God: and the word of God will grant that with that faculty, with that power, with that attainment, with that article of property, with that poſſeſſion, you are not bound to ſhew forth love to God. What do you produce? Nothing? No faculty, no power, no attainment, either of body, or of mind, no article of property, no poſſeſſion, for which you are not indebted to God? Not one? Not even one? And yet you complain that you are required to love Him in every thing! You owe to Him all that you are, all that you have, all for which you hope: and yet complain becauſe you are commanded to love Him with all your heart, and with all your ſoul, and with all your mind!

Perhaps, however, you may ſtate, that you do not think that the love which the text requires you to ſhew to the Lord your God, is in itſelf too great, or that any degree of love to God can be too great: but that you are at a loſs to underſtand how this entire and conſtant ſurrender of the heart to the love of God can be compatible with the claims which your families and friends have upon your affections, and with the neceſſary buſineſs of life. "If I am "bound," you ſay, "invariably to love "God with all my heart, and ſoul, and

" mind; there ſeems no opening left for " permiſſion to love my fellow-creatures, " ſtrongly as the Scriptures command me to " love all men, and eſpecially thoſe of my " own houſehold. And if to manifeſt my " love to God muſt be my conſtant object, " my continual employment: how am I " to diſcharge my worldly duties? How am " I to be *not ſlothful in buſineſs*? How am I " to engage in buſineſs at all.

Now, my brethren, you may lay it down as a general rule, that when the word of God ſets before you two commandments, which at firſt ſight appear contrary each to the other; you will not only find, on fair examination, that they are not contrary to each other, when rightly underſtood; but you will alſo find that to underſtand them rightly is not to take away the ſolid meaning, or to leſſen the plain and natural force, either of the one or of the other. And thus in the inſtance before us, ſober reflection will convince you, that to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and ſoul, and mind, will not interfere with warm affection to your families, your relations, your friends, nor with induſtry in your worldly callings: and that love to your fellow-creatures, and diligence in your proper buſineſs, need not to

prevent you from keeping the firſt and great commandment of loving the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your ſoul, and with all your mind.

To make theſe truths evident, we muſt examine more particularly what this commandment requires.

To love God with all our heart, and ſoul, and mind, clearly implies, that we are to love Him beyond compariſon better than we love any other object. We are not to love any other object more than we love him. For he, ſaith our Lord, that *loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me. And he that loveth ſon or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me (c).* We are to love Him beyond compariſon better than we love any other object. For *if any man come unto Me*, adds our Saviour, *and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and ſiſters, yea, and his own life alſo; he cannot be my diſciple (d).* If the love which a perſon bears to his deareſt earthly object, be not ſo inferior to his love to God, that it may in compariſon be named hatred: he cannot be the diſciple of Chriſt, he does not love the Lord his God with all his heart. But is it not very poſſible to love father and

(*c*) Matth. x. 37. (*d*) Luke, xiv. 26.

mother, and wife, and child, and brother, and ſiſter warmly, and yet to love them beyond compariſon leſs than you love God? Is it not very poſſible to love each of them with cordial affection; and yet to be at the ſame time willing to give up each of them and all of them, if duty to God ſhould require the ſacrifice; to be willing to offend each of them and all of them, rather than to fail in love to God by breaking, in order to pleaſe them, the leaſt of his commandments? If your love to them, be it ever ſo affectionate, be kept thus in ſubjection to your love to God; it interferes not with the firſt and great commandment. Nay more; much more. Being an act of obedience to others of His commandments, which require you to cheriſh a tender love for thoſe of your own houſehold, for all with whom you are connected, for all mankind; it is even itſelf, in its place and degree, an act of obedience to that firſt and great commandment: it is one of the tokens and teſtimonies that you are ſtriving to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your ſoul, and with all your mind.

In the next place; to love God in the manner deſcribed in the text implies, that we deſire to do all things according to His will, and

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for the advancement of His glory. Wilfully to continue in any habit of ſin is inconſiſtent, not only with loving God with all our heart, and ſoul, and mind, but with any diſpoſitions approaching towards that ſtate. Faithful obedience unto holineſs is the fruit and the proof of love to God. *He*, ſaith our Lord, *that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me. He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My ſayings (e).* And if we are not anxious to promote the glory of God, it is manifeſt that we do not love Him. For what purpoſe is a chriſtian to *let his light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee his good works?* In order that *they may* be led to *glorify his Father who is in heaven (f).* How is he in his own conduct to glorify God? *Herein*, anſwers our Lord, *is my Father glorified; that ye bear much fruit (g).* And what fruit? The fruit of righteouſneſs. *I pray*, ſaith St. Paul, *that ye may be filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt unto the glory and praiſe of God (h).* And what are the univerſal directions delivered on this ſubject in the Scriptures? *Whatſoever ye do, do all to the glory of God, that God may in all things be glorified through Jeſus Chriſt (i).* He then who

(*e*) John, xiv. 21, 24. (*f*) Matt. v. 16. (*g*) John, xv. 8.
(*h*) Philipp. ix. 11. (*i*) 1 Cor. x. 31. 1 Pet. iv. 11.

is the ſervant of Mammon not only does not glorify God, but oppoſes his glory: not only does not love God with all his heart, but does not love him at all. If you ſet your heart on worldly poſſeſſions; if you have your treaſure upon earth; if, as St. Paul ſpeaks, you *will be rich (k)*; if you are reſolved to be rich at any rate, or at leaſt are eagerly ſet upon being rich; if you are purſuing your calling, whatever the nature of your employment may be, in any deceitful manner, in any unjuſt way; or in a ſpirit of ambition, or in a ſpirit of covetouſneſs, or in ſhort in a ſpirit of ſelfiſhneſs: you are not obeying God, you are not glorifying God, you are not loving God. But cannot buſineſs be purſued in other ways, with another ſpirit? Cannot a worldly employment be followed from chriſtian principles, for chriſtian purpoſes, with chriſtian tempers, according to chriſtian rules? Is it neceſſary that in your dealings you ſhould be graſping, or impoſing, or oppreſſive, or ambitious, or covetous, or ſelfiſh? Is it not poſſible to obey God, to glorify God, to ſhew continual love to God, in your buſineſs and by your buſineſs? Suppoſe yourſelf to know a perſon diligent and proſperous in his worldly concerns, yet ſtedfaſtly endeavouring

(*k*) 1 Tim. vi. 9.

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to pleaſe God in all his tranſactions: *not ſlothful in buſineſs*, but at the ſame time *fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord* (*l*). Obſerve ſuch a perſon, before he undertakes any plan, ſeriouſly examining whether it be juſt; whether ſucceſs in it will probably conduce to his religious welfare, or at leaſt will not be likely to injure it. Obſerve him ſcrupulouſly ſhunning all artifices, all undue advantages of every kind, in carrying on his concerns: and though at the ſacrifice of conſiderable profit, at the riſk of much offence, and even of much contempt, faithful in abſtaining from breaking the ſabbath, and from cauſing his ſervants to break it. Obſerve him in the midſt of his occupations maintaining the habit of conſecrating every day to God by prayer, and by meditation on the Scriptures. Obſerve him, when riches encreaſe, not ſetting his heart upon them, but living detached from them, as a ſtranger and a pilgrim ſeeking a better country. Obſerve him, when troubles and diſappointments ariſe, not only reſigned, but cheerful, *always and for all things giving thanks* (*m*). Obſerve him *ready to diſtribute* (*n*); ever willing to communicate to the diſtreſſed of the talents

(*l*) Rom. xii. 11. (*m*) Eph. v. 20.
(*n*) 1 Tim. vi. 18.

entruſted

entruſted to him, and from a principle of chriſtian charity, as the ſteward of God. Obſerve him watchful to make his very buſineſs an inſtrument of promoting religion, by encouraging piety, by countenancing chriſtian morality, by checking ſin, by ſpreading religious knowledge, in the circle in which he moves, eſpecially among his own dependents. What ſhall be ſaid of ſuch a character? That man, whoever he may be, whatever his line of life may be, while he labours with induſtry in his lawful calling, is ſeeking firſt the kingdom of God and His righteouſneſs. While he lays up treaſure for himſelf, he is alſo rich towards God. He loves God, his very exertions in his buſineſs are among the proofs that he loves God, with all his heart, and with all his ſoul, and with all his mind. Go and do thou likewiſe.

I fear, my brethren, that if we are impartial in comparing our own feelings and proceedings with this firſt and great commandment, we ſhall find that our love to God is much more defective than we have been accuſtomed to ſuppoſe. How little do we act as if we loved God with all our hearts! If we thus loved Him, our chief delight would be in thinking of Him, in ſerving Him, in obeying

obeying Him, in glorifying Him. Is this the caſe with us? No. We rather ſeem to think of Him with reluctance; to look upon His laws as burthens; to praiſe Him with lukewarmneſs; to be indifferent to His glory. We meaſure out our ſervice to Him, and with a ſparing hand. We appear afraid of doing more for His ſake than is abſolutely neceſſary: deſirous of contriving to have juſt ſo much religion, and yet juſt as little religion, as may be required to ſecure an entrance into Heaven. Is this ſtate of the heart conſiſtent with loving God with all the heart? Would ſuch a ſtate be poſſible, if we thus loved Him? If a man loves a relation or a friend, does he limit himſelf to think of him no more than is abſolutely neceſſary, to pleaſe him no more than is abſolutely neceſſary? How ſpeaks the voice of affection? Does it ſay; "How little will be "ſufficient for me to do for this perſon?" Is not its language this: "How much may "I be able to do for him?" Does it ſay; "Surely I have done enough already?" Is not its language; "How ſhould I rejoice in "an opportunity of doing more?" My brethren; if we are on the watch leſt we ſhould have too much religion, it is evident that we wiſh that we might be excuſed from having

having any. If we are careful leſt we ſhould love God too much, it is plain that we do not love Him at all. We may be afraid of Him, and may do various things through dread of Him; but we do not love Him. Be not apprehenſive of having too much religion: be apprehenſive of having too little. And too little you certainly have, if you are meaſuring it and weighing it leſt it ſhould be too much. Men may be injudicious in their ways of ſhewing their earneſtneſs in religion: but to be too religious is impoſſible. Is it poſſible to be too free from ſin; too pure, too upright, too ſincere, too peaceable, too affectionate, too forgiving, too free from pride, and from covetouſsneſs, and from envy, and from diſcontent; too like unto the Lord Jeſus Chriſt? Is it poſſible to be too watchful for conſcience' ſake *to render unto all their dues*; to *love your neighbour as yourſelf*; to *follow* that *holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord?* Is it poſſible to be too earneſt to *eſcape the damnation of hell?* Is it poſſible to be too ſolicitous to ſecure through the blood of your Redeemer an eternal inheritance of glory? Is it poſſible to love the Lord your God too much? He commands you to love Him with all your heart, and with all your ſoul, and with

with all your mind. Can you love him more? And do you love him ſufficiently, if you love him leſs? If we can talk of loving God too much, or of being too earneſt in religion; we ſhew either that we ill underſtand what religion and the love of God are; or that they are things for which in our hearts we have little reliſh.

If to love the Lord your God with all the heart, ſoul, and mind, is the duty of man; it is alſo his happineſs. *Great peace have they that love thy law, O Lord. There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked. Let them that love thy name, be joyful in Thee:* for *Thou, Lord, will bleſs the righteous. God keepeth mercy for them that love Him. If a man love Me, My Father will love him: and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him* (*o*). So teſtifies the Scripture. Is there not another witneſs? Yes: Experience. Enquire of thoſe who, in their earlier days, lived without love to God; envying, haraſſing, deceiving, oppreſſing their neighbour, ſeeking ſatisfaction in their own devices, and ſucceeding in their purſuits after worldly objects and immoral gratifications; but afterwards were turned by divine grace into

(*o*) Pſ. cxix. 165. Iſ. lvii. 21. Pſ. v. 11, 12. Nehem. i. 5. John, xiv. 23.

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new paths, were taught to ſet their affections on things above, and principally on the Lord their God. They will tell you, that it is only ſince the love of God has been ſhed abroad in their hearts by His Spirit, that they have known what it is to be happy. They will tell you, that in the worldly ſucceſs, in the noiſy merriment, in the ſinful indulgences, in which they formerly looked for delight, they found emptineſs, vanity, vexation. They will tell you that, in proportion as they have been enabled to love God more and more warmly, they have enjoyed in greater and greater abundance that peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding; that they have enjoyed, in ſickneſs as in health, in adverſity as in proſperity, more and more of that ſerenity of ſoul, of thoſe inward conſolations, which the world can neither give nor take away. Shall the Scriptures ſpeak to you in vain? Shall univerſal experience be loſt upon you? Will you perſiſt in ſearching for happineſs in the paths where millions have ſought it in vain; and ſtill refuſe to ſeek it in the track where no one who ſought it was in the end diſappointed. May *the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God* (*p*). May He teach you to ſurrender

(*p*) 2 Theſſ. iii. 5.

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them entirely unto Him, to fix them entirely upon Him; and to prove that you love Him above all things by loving for His ſake your neighbour as yourſelf, and by living in all things unto the Son of God who died for you.

SERMON VII.

ON BROTHERLY LOVE.

Acts vii. 26.

Sirs, ye are Brethren.

[illegible] been adopted in his infancy by the daughter of Pharaoh as her own son, until he was forty years of age [illegible] the King of Egypt. In the [illegible] period of his life, but in what [illegible] the Scriptures do not mention, he received a divine intimation that he [illegible] to be the perſon, who ſhould [illegible] children of Iſrael from that houſe [illegible]. When he was now full forty [illegible] he appears to have imagined that [illegible] of their deliverance was come. He [illegible] and looked on their burdens, in [illegible] that ſome favourable opportunity would ſpeedily ariſe of convincing his [illegible] that, by his means, they were to be delivered from the oppreſſion under which they

they groaned. Soon did he conclude that the opportunity preſented itſelf. *Seeing one* of the Iſraelites *ſuffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppreſſed, and ſmote the Egyptian. For he ſuppoſed his brethren would have underſtood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they underſtood not.* Again going forth among them on the following day, he *ſhewed himſelf unto them as they ſtrove:* he interfered between two of them who were engaged in a violent conteſt each with the other, *and would have ſet them at one again*; would have cauſed them mutually to ceaſe from offering injury, and would have reconciled them. What was the argument which he employed to lead them to right tempers and right conduct? It was this ſimple and emphatical truth: *Sirs, ye are brethren.*

In what reſpects were the Jews brethren? In the firſt place, they were all deſcended from Adam and Eve, the common parents of the human race. Thus were they all born of one blood, partakers of one nature. In this reſpect they were equally brethren to each other and to all mankind. But, in the next place, the general conſanguinity of man with man vaniſhed in compariſon with the particular relation between Jew

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:ſideration of Chriſtians.

Chriſtians are the deſcendents of Adam and Eve; and, as ſuch, partake of one blood, of one nature. They cannot indeed, like the Jews, trace up their origin to ſome common anceſtor ſhort of Adam: becauſe, through the unbounded mercy of their Heavenly Father, they are gathered out of many kindreds, and tongues, and peoples, and languages, by Him who was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, by Him in whom all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed. Still, however, Chriſtians, no leſs than the Jews, derive their earthly deſcent from the ſame ſtock. As the Jews were to have no communication with idolaters; ſo likewiſe are the ſervants of Chriſt enjoined to keep themſelves apart from an unbelieving world, to have no fellowſhip with the workers of iniquity. They have heard the expreſs command, *Come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the Lord* (*a*), *and touch not the*

(*a*) 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

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heſſalonians he declares, *This is the will of God, that no man go beyond, and defraud his brother in any matter; becauſe that the Lord is the avenger of all ſuch, as we alſo have forewarned you and teſtified* (*b*). Again, to the Corinthians he writes; *Brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather ſuffer yourſelves to be defrauded? Nay you do wrong and defraud; and that, your brethren* (*c*). If a man plots iniquity againſt thoſe perſons with whom he is united by extraordinary ties; if he oppreſſes and plunders thoſe whom he is ſpecially bound to

(*b*) 1 Theſſ. iv. 6. (*c*) 1 Cor. vi. 6—8.

protect; is not his ſin highly aggravated? Such is our ſin, if we plot iniquity againſt each other; if we oppreſs or plunder each other; if we in any reſpect defraud or wrong each other. We all are brethren.

Next, obſerve how this conſideration bears upon ſins of unkindneſs. To various offences of this claſs it is applied in Scripture. Thus St. Paul, after having decided in the affirmative a queſtion warmly agitated in his days, whether it was lawful to eat meat which had been offered by the heathen in the temples of their idols, and was afterwards ſold in the market for food; ſtrongly warns the Corinthians againſt eating it, if they ſhould perceive that by ſuch a proceeding, though in itſelf lawful, they ſhould be in danger of leading any perſon, who doubted on the ſubject, to partake of the meat notwithſtanding his ſcruples. *Take heed*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *leſt by any means this liberty of yours become a ſtumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any man ſee thee, which haſt knowledge, ſit at meat in the idol's temple; ſhall not the conſcience of him that is weak be emboldened to eat thoſe things which are offered to idols? And through thy knowledge ſhall the weak brother periſh, for whom Chriſt died. But when ye ſo ſin againſt the brethren, and wound their weak conſcience,*

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ye ſin againſt Chriſt (*d*). *Grudge not one againſt another, brethren,* ſaith St. James, *leſt ye be condemned. Behold the Judge ſtandeth at the door. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that ſpeaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, ſpeaketh evil of the Law, and judgeth the Law* (*e*). On the guilt of failing in any branch of love to a brother, St. John repeatedly dwells. *He that ſaith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkneſs even until now. In this the children of God are manifeſted, and the children of the Devil: whoſoever doeth not righteouſneſs is not of God; neither he that loveth not his brother. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whoſoever hateth his brother is a murderer. If a man ſay, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath ſeen; how can he love God, whom he hath not ſeen* (*f*)? If you were ſimply to hear of a man conducting himſelf in a very unkind way towards ſome other perſons; you would be ſatisfied from that account alone, before you had inquired who the perſons were towards whom he acted thus, that he had committed a great ſin. But how much greater would his ſin appear to you, if you ſhould learn that the objects of his unkind-

(*d*) 1 Cor. viii. 9—12. (*e*) James, iv. 11. v. 9.
(*f*) 1 John, ii. 9. iii. 10, 14, 15. iv. 20.

neſs

neſs were no others than the ſons of his own father and mother! Thus aggravated is our guilt in the ſight of our Heavenly father and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, when we commit an act of unkindneſs againſt one of our Chriſtian brethren.

Thirdly. We may notice how forcibly the conſideration, that we all are brethren, expoſes the grievous ſinfulneſs of that moſt prevailing ſin, both among the rich and among the poor, Pride.

So it is applied by Saint Paul: *Why doſt thou ſet at nought thy brother? For we ſhall all ſtand before the Judgement-ſeat of Chriſt* (*g*). It lies alſo at the root of the reproof which St. James addreſſes to thoſe who, while profeſſing the faith of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Lord of glory, had reſpect of perſons; and even when aſſembled for religious worſhip, received the rich with flattering diſtinctions, and ſhewed by their contemptuous treatment of any poor man who came into the place of worſhip, how little they felt towards him as towards a brother (*h*). *If I did deſpiſe*, ſays Job, *the cauſe of my man-ſervant, or of my maid-ſervant, when they contended with me; what then ſhall I do when God riſeth up? And when He viſiteth, what ſhall I anſwer Him? Did not he that made me in the*

(*g*) Rom. xiv. 10. (*h*) James, ii. 1—4

womb

womb, make him? And did not one faſhion us in the womb (*i*)? *No man,* ſaith the Scripture, *hateth his own fleſh.* Can any man rationally, can any man conſiſtently with natural feeling, deſpiſe his own fleſh? Yet we are all members one of another; brethren by nature, brethren in Chriſt, Whoever deſpiſeth another, deſpiſeth his own fleſh. Whoever diſplays pride under any ſhape towards a fellow Chriſtian, diſplays it towards a brother for whom Chriſt died. He ſcorns a brother of his own; he ſcorns a brother of the Lord Jeſus.

Let us now obſerve in what manner the circumſtance of our being brethren is employed in the Scriptures, to conſtrain us, after having ceaſed to do evil, to learn to do good; with what energy it preſſes upon us the diſpoſitions which we are to cheriſh, and the conduct which we are to manifeſt, one towards another.

Here we may notice in the firſt place, that the name by which univerſally the apoſtles addreſs Chriſtians, is *Brethren.* When they mention perſons who are not Chriſtians, their deſcription is, *they that are of the contrary part, they that are without* (*k*), not within the pale of Chriſtian brotherhood. To

(*i*) Job, xxxi. 13—15. (*k*) Tit. ii. 8. 1 Cor. v. 12, 13. 1 Theſſ. iv. 12, 1 Tim. iii. 7.

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1 Pet. ii. 17. Gal. vi. 10.

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thee, until ſeven times: but until ſeventy times
ſeven (*n*). On another occaſion our Saviour delivered this command to his diſciples: *Take heed to yourſelves. If thy brother treſpaſs againſt thee ſeven times in a day, and ſeven times in a day, turn again to thee ſaying, I repent; thou ſhalt forgive him* (*o*). *If meat*, ſaith St. Paul, *make my brother to offend, I will eat no fleſh while the world ſtandeth, leſt I make my brother to offend* (*p*). At another time the ſame apoſtle declares, after the moſt ſolemn appeal to God; *I could wiſh that myſelf were accurſed from Chriſt*,

(*m*) Rom. xii. 10. Hebr. xiii. 1. 2 Pet. i. 5, 7. 1 Pet. iii. 8. Luke, xxii. 32. 1 Pet. i. 22. 1 John, iv. 21.
(*n*) Matth. xviii. 21, 22. (*o*) Luke, xvii. 3, 4.
(*p*) 1 Cor viii. 13.

ſubjected

ſubjected to judgements in this world, ſuch as thoſe which were about to be inflicted on the Jews, *for my brethren.* For what brethren? The apoſtle adds, *For my kinſmen according to the fleſh* (*q*): for his unconverted and unrepenting and perſecuting countrymen the Iſraelites. What then would he not have thought it his duty to ſuffer in the preſent life for the good of his Chriſtian brethren? St. John's language is equally clear and impreſſive: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, becauſe he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren* (*r*). Even when a profeſſed Chriſtian refuſed obedience to the commands of the inſpired apoſtles of Chriſt, and was, on that account, to be openly diſowned by the church, and treated according to our Lord's direction, as a heathen man and a publican; the love of brotherhood was not to be forgotten. *We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye withdraw yourſelves from every brother that walketh diſorderly, and not after the tradition received of us. And if any man obey not our word by this epiſtle; note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be aſhamed. Yet count him not as an enemy: but admoniſh him as a brother.*

(*q*) Rom. ix. 1—3. (*r*) 1 John, iii. 16.

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In other paſſages, love for Chriſt's ſake to our Chriſtian brethren is pointed out as the mark by which we may judge whether we are perſonally in a ſtate of Salvation, or not. *Whoſo hath this world's good, and ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in him? He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death. Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. We know that we have paſſed from death unto life, becauſe we love the brethren* (*t*).

The occaſion upon which Moſes ſpoke the words of the text furniſhes an additional leſſon cloſely connected with our ſubject. *Sirs*, ſaid he to the two contending Iſraelites, *Ye are brethren. Why do ye wrong one to another?* Was this addreſs favourably received by both of them? No. Which party was it that refuſed to liſten to Moſes? *He that did his neighbour wrong thruſt Moſes away, ſaying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?* It was the man who was doing wrong to the other that ſhut his ears and his heart againſt the conſideration, that he and his neighbour were brethren. Let us accuſtom ourſelves to apply this fact to our own conduct; to try our own

(*s*) 2 Theſſ. iii. 6. 14, 15. (*t*) 1 John, iii. 14. 17. iv. 7. 12.

proceedings by the rule which it ſets before us. Whenever we feel reluctance in our mind unequivocally to acknowledge a particular perſon as a brother, and cordially to treat him in all reſpects as a brother; we may be aſſured that our actual diſpoſition is more or leſs to do wrong to him. We are under the influence of injuſtice towards him; or of unkindneſs; or, as is moſt frequently the caſe, of pride.

Finally, the unity of Chriſtian brotherhood does not deſtroy thoſe earthly diſtinctions between man and man, which God has appointed for the good of the whole family of Chriſt. On the contrary, it ſupplies a new motive for the conſcientious diſcharge of all the relative duties belonging to our ſtation. Thus St. Paul, ſpeaking of ſervants ſays; *They that have believing maſters, let them not deſpiſe them becauſe they are brethren*; let them not imagine that, becauſe as Chriſtians they are brethren to their maſters, and on a level with them in the ſight of God, they may on that account be the leſs attentive to their commands: *but rather* let them *do them ſervice becauſe they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit* (*u*). Let the very circumſtance of the maſter being a Chriſtian brother, incline and animate his Chriſtian bro-

(*u*) 1 Tim. vi. 2.

ther,

ther, the ſervant to be the more earneſt to conſult his maſter's wiſhes, and to honour him by prompt and faithful obedience. And is not this a juſt and a powerful argument? Is it not an argument of univerſal application? Who would not feel the more deſirous to render ſervice, to manifeſt kindneſs, to fulfil every act of duty, to another perſon, in conſequence of that perſon's being his brother? "Protect that man's rights the more "watchfully; for he is thy brother. Ho- "nour him the more cheerfully; for he is "thy brother. Conſult his comfort and "his welfare the more ſtedfaſtly; for he is "thy brother. Love him the more fervent- "ly with a pure heart; for he is thy bro- "ther." Whether we are in a higher or in a lower ſtation, whether we rule or ſerve; can we be inſenſible to the force of ſuch an argument? *Sirs, ye* all are *brethren.* In this conſideration let the rich and the poor, the great and the humble, rejoice alike: for on its practical influence the happineſs of all equally depends. While it impreſſes with new energy all thoſe offices and branches of ſubordination which are eſſential to the welfare of individuals, to the conduct of domeſtic life, to the public order of the world; it ſoftens every ſtrong line of diſtinction between dif-

ferent claſſes or between different perſons; throws a veil over every ſmaller diſcrimination; cauſes us to feel, and to act as men that feel, that all worldly diſtinctions are but for a day; and teaches us to loſe ſight of them all in viewing our comprehenſive union of brotherhood in that Redeemer, in whom *there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumciſion nor uncircumciſion, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Chriſt is all, and in all* (*w*).

(*w*) Col. iii. 11.

SER-

SERMON VIII.

On the Love of Money.

1 Tim. vi. 10.

The Love of Money is the Root of all Evil.

IN applying the moral precepts of Scripture, and eſpecially when we make the application to our own proceedings, we are accuſtomed not to ſurvey them with a comprehenſive eye. We look at generals without being aware of the number of particulars which they involve. We vaguely contemplate the outline of the form, when we ought to diſcriminate the individual features. When we turn our thoughts to the ſin of murder, we bring before our imagination the midnight aſſaſſin and the bloody corpſe; and forget that *whoſoever hateth his brother is a murderer* (*a*). When we reflect on the guilt of idolatry, we picture to ourſelves the blind devotee proſtrate before the riſing ſun,

(*a*) 1 John iii. 15.

or kneeling to the image of a ſaint: and remember not that the glutton practically worſhips his brutiſh appetite as a god (*b*).

It is thus with the text before us. When we read this warning againſt the love of money, we repreſent to ourſelves the miſer brooding over his hoard. If rouſed to extend our views, we think of the rapacious extortioner. There we pauſe again. It is ſlowly and with difficulty that we are brought to diſcern the wide, yet natural and ſimple, meaning of the apoſtle.

What is *the love of Money?* A ſtronger deſire of worldly poſſeſſions than befits a ſervant of Chriſt. Who are the perſons guilty of being actuated by the love of Money? Not the miſer only and the extortioner; but every man, be he rich or poor, who indulges a ſtronger inclination to acquire or to retain money than becomes a Chriſtian, a ſtranger and pilgrim upon earth. Obſerve, yet without being enſnared into a ſuppoſition that the frequency of a ſin takes away from its inherent ſinfulneſs; obſerve how common, in the preſent ſtate of mankind, that ſin of which we ſpeak is likely to be. Money, it has juſtly been ſaid, is power. So far as worldly objects are concerned, and ſo far as

(*b*) Philipp. iii. 19.

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the aſſertion can be true reſpecting any ſingle inſtrument of obtaining them, Money is univerſal power. It is a hand reaching to the horizon, and bringing back every thing which it graſps. Is a man ſolicitous for a ſpacious dwelling, and correſponding accommodations around him? Money purchaſes them. Is he anxious for ſplendour? Money procures it. Is he ambitious of diſtinction? Money commands it. Is he eager to run the round of amuſements? Money places him in every point of the circle. Is he bent on the gratifications of luxury? Money buys them all. For the furtherance of almoſt every wiſh, for the accompliſhment of almoſt every plan, terminating in the preſent life, Money offers helps, facilities, and ſtrength. While it is the inſtrument of evil in the hands of the wicked, it is the inſtrument of good in the hands of the righteous; and from that very circumſtance is not ſeldom overvalued by the righteous themſelves. In the ordinary profeſſions of life, among the higher claſſes and among the lower, the acquiſition of money is a principal object. That object, which men are conſtantly exerting themſelves to attain, they are under a continual inducement to prize too highly.

Numbers too, in every rank, are in the habit of yearly accumulation for the purpoſe of making proviſion for their children: a purpoſe, when reſtricted within the limits of Chriſtian moderation, commendable and requiſite; but frequently overſteping its lawful bounds, and even when it has become deeply tinctured with avarice or ambition, retaining the deluding ſemblance of parental affection. Then there are few perſons, however affluent, who have not experienced, during ſhorter or longer periods, embarraſſments in conſequence of a deficiency of money; and a tendency to be too anxious for money as a ſecurity againſt the recurrence of difficulties. To the young, money recommends itſelf as the medium of indulgence; to perſons farther advanced in years, as a ſafeguard againſt the neceſſities and the diſreſpect ſuppoſed to impend over old age. It is money likewiſe which is practically ſeen to draw the main line of demarcation between different claſſes of ſociety; between the ſubordinate diviſions of the different claſſes; nay almoſt between individual and individual in each diviſion. Can we wonder that it is overrated by the world? Under this diverſity of allurement, under this force of example, where is the man who is not in danger of being

ing entangled by the love of money? What but the grace of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt can fortify him againſt the temptation?

The love of Money is the root of all evil. A ſhort but moſt emphatical character. What does it imply? Does the apoſtle affirm that whenever a ſinful deed is committed, the origin of it may be traced to the love of Money? No. He affirms that there is no conceivable ſin, which the love of money may not perſuade a man to commit.

To bring forward ſome examples of the truth of Saint Paul's declaration may contribute, under the divine bleſſing, to impreſs upon us the greatneſs of the danger, againſt which he would put us upon our guard; and the variety of forms under which it beſets us.

The Scriptures place before us aweful examples of the deſtructive influence exerciſed by the love of Money. There we behold Achan purloining from the ſpoil of Jericho treaſure which the Lord of All had expreſsly commanded to be deſtroyed. There we ſee Balaam, who *loved the wages of unrighteouſneſs* (*c*), hankering after permiſſion to curſe a people, concerning whom God had ſolemnly declared to the ſoothſayer himſelf a determined pur-

(*c*) 2 Pet. ii. 15.

poſe to bleſs them. There we ſee Rechab and Baanah, who, in the hope of a reward, ſlew Iſhboſheth, *a righteous perſon, in his own houſe, upon his bed* (*d*). There we ſurvey Judas, ſelling his maſter for thirty pieces of ſilver. There, before the preſence of Chriſt himſelf, while he proclaims, *Ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon*, ſtand *the Phariſees, who are covetous, hearing all theſe things, and deriding him* (*e*). There ſtands Demas, the deſerter of his miniſtry, *having loved this preſent world* (*f*). There ſtand Demetrius and his companions, clamouring in ſupport of idolatry, becauſe by the craft of making ſhrines for Diana, they had their wealth (*g*). There ſtand thoſe apoſtates from the religion of the ſon of God, who, having determined that they *will be rich, having coveted after money*, in times of perſecution, *erred from the faith*, renounced the goſpel to ſave their property, and *pierced themſelves through with many ſorrows* (*h*). There ſtand the firſt corrupters of Chriſtian doctrine, *ſubverting whole houſes, and teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's ſake* (*i*). There ſtands the completer of the *Myſtery of Iniquity, Babylon the*

(*d*) 2 Sam. iv. 11.
(*e*) Luke, xvi. 14.
(*f*) 2 Tim. iv. 10.
(*g*) Acts, xix. 24, &c.
(*h*) 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.
(*i*) Tit. i. 11.

Great

Great, the Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth, doomed, for *her merchandize and the fruits that her ſoul luſteth after,* to everlaſting deſtruction (*j*). With one voice they cry; "*The love of Money is the root of all evil!*"

Let us turn our eyes from antient times to the preſent day; from individual offenders to particular ſins. When life has been maliciouſly taken away, and the cauſe of the dreadful deed is dragged to light before the tribunal of juſtice; how frequently is it made manifeſt that the poiſon was adminiſtered, or the weapon of violence employed, under the ſtimulus of the love of Money! Of thievery and robbery, whatever be the form of depredation, whether a private man or the public be the party plundered; of forgery, of ſmuggling, of falſe returns and defective payments in taxes, of ſwindling, of burglary, of the ſuppreſſion or the deſtruction of wills, of documents, of title-deeds; the deſire of gain is undeniably the ſource. Look to the numerous methods, in which, under the garb of peace and friendſhip, man preys upon man; and you trace them to this deſire. From hence come the tricks in trade; the ſecret advantages taken of the neceſſity or of the ignorance of a neighbour; the impo-

(*j*) Rev. xvii. 5. xviii. 11—14.

ſitions

ſitions practiſed to enhance the value of an article, of which you are anxious to diſpoſe; the artifices adopted to depreciate the worth of another, which you are ſolicitous to purchaſe; *the ſcant meaſure that is abominable, the wicked balances, and the bag of deceitful weights* (*k*). Hence alſo come the frauds, the deliberate villainies, the frantic horrors, of the gaming table. How frequently does the tremendous guilt of perjury originate in the love of money! From the member of the legiſlature, when he converts his office into an adventure for political emolument, down to the voter who exchanges his ſuffrage for a bribe; from the clergyman who turns the miniſtry of the goſpel into a trading ſpeculation for preferment, to the proprietor who defrauds his paſtor of a portion of his legal maintainance; from the pinching landlord to the diſhoneſt tenant; from the grinding maſter to the cheating workman; in the higher walks of ſociety and in the loweſt, in the man of improved underſtanding no leſs than in him who has been nurſed in ignorance, what lamentable proofs may we diſcover of the power of this overwhelming paſſion! Look to the common tranſactions of private families, and its power will be continually viſible. From the love of money proceed thoſe

(*k*) Micah. iii. 10, 11.

merce-

mercenary marriages, which by a juſt judgement are the forerunners of domeſtic miſery: marriages not of affection but of convenience, not of principle but of covetouſneſs: marriages in which the only circumſtance that can warrant a hope of matrimonial comfort through the divine bleſſing, the prevalence, namely, of Religion in the heart, is diſregarded. From the ſame cauſe ariſes the neglect ſo frequently manifeſted on the part of parents as to the religious character of the perſons, with whom intereſt prompts them to ſtation their children for inſtruction in a profeſſion, or to fix them as aſſociates in buſineſs. To the ſame cauſe are to be aſſigned thoſe malignant hopes, thoſe evil wiſhes, ſometimes decidedly perceptible to man, more frequently, it is to be feared, diſcernible by the eye of God: intereſted hopes eager to be gratified by the diſappointment of a competitor; and wiſhes harboured by perſons gaping for advantages, which they promiſe themſelves that they ſhall attain on the death of the preſent poſſeſſors. To the ſame cauſe we may trace in numberleſs inſtances the officious flattery, the time-ſerving obſequiouſneſs, the cringing ſervility; the ſinful compliances, the ſinful countenance and encouragement, diſplayed, not only by inferiors, but by equals,

equals, but by ſuperiors, towards men from whoſe patronage, or whoſe purſe, or whoſe teſtimentary notice, a recompenſe, which may juſtly be termed *the wages of unrighteouſneſs*, is ſpeedily or ultimately expected. To the ſame cauſe may occaſionally be attributed an effect, which on the firſt glance might ſeem deducible rather from any other ſource than from the love of money, namely, flagrant and continued extravagance: extravagance practiſed upon ſyſtem by the calculating ſpendthrift for the purpoſe of ingratiating himſelf with potent friends, whoſe influence may at length remunerate him with advantages of ſuch magnitude as ſhall demonſtrate profuſion to have been prudence. Is it neceſſary to enlarge the catalogue of iniquities, originating from the ſource which we have been contemplating? Has the apoſtle pronounced without reaſon, that *the love of money is the root of all evil?* Is it without reaſon, whether you be rich or poor, that you are warned of your own perſonal danger of being enſnared by the love of money; and of being drawn forward by it into ſins, from the idea of which you would at preſent recoil?

From this univerſal danger what can preſerve you? The power of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. By what means ſhall he deliver you?

By

By influencing your heart through His Spirit and His word. While you ſeek then by habitual and fervent prayer the promiſed gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; attend to ſome of the conſiderations, by which your Lord admoniſhes you in His word againſt the love of money.

Reflect, in the firſt place, on the general emptineſs of human poſſeſſions, of every thing which riches can procure. *Verily all is vanity and vexation of ſpiri!* How little is there of ſolid ſatisfaction in luxury, in diſſipation, in ſplendour, in honour, in power! With how many drawbacks are the higheſt gratifications which they can furniſh accompanied? Aſk the man who has devoted himſelf to any one of theſe objects, and has ſucceeded in the purſuit, whether the poſſeſſion of the prize has in any reaſonable degree anſwered his expectations. Aſk him, whether, if his life were again to commence, he would employ it again in the ſame ſolicitous chaſe. There are individuals, whom no leſſons even of perſonal experience render wiſe. There are individuals, whom pride and falſe ſhame will not ſuffer to confeſs the folly, under the ſenſe of which they are inwardly groaning. But if the man to whom you propoſe your queſtions be rational, and willing

ling to unboſom himſelf; his anſwers will warn you to forbear from treading in his ſteps. *Let your moderation be known unto all men. Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content* (*l*).

Conſider, in the next place, the uncertain and ſhort continuance of all things on this ſide of the grave. In the changes of human events, how frequently do *riches make themſelves wings and fly away!* What numbers born to affluence are at this moment ſcattered over the face of Europe in penury! What thouſands and tens of thouſands are pining in their deſolated homes over the wrecks of their poſſeſſions! "But theſe "events," you reply, "are extraordinary "calamities, produced by unparalleled con-"vulſions, and by the ravages of unex-"ampled wars." And are you ſecure againſt ſimilar convulſions and ravages? Have you aſcertained that the ſword of God is about to be replaced in its ſcabbard? Are you ſatisfied that its ſtroke will not reach this land? Are you guaranteed that it ſhall not reach yourſelf? Can you ſay, *We have made a covenant with death, and with* the ſword *we are at agreement; when the overflowing ſcourge ſhall paſs through, it ſhall not come unto us* (*m*)?

(*l*) Philip. iv. 5. 1 Tim. vi. 8. (*m*) Iſ. xxviii. 15.

Is

Is the preſent *a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and ſheep and oxen, and men-ſervants and maid-ſervants* (*n*)? When the *judgements* of God *are abroad*, when all *the foundations of the earth are out of courſe*; *ſeekeſt thou great things for thyſelf? Seek them not.* How knoweſt thou but that even now *the Lord ſaith thus: Behold, that which I have built, I will break down; and that which I have planted, I will pluck up; even this whole land* (*o*)? But if it be the merciful purpoſe of God that *none of theſe evils come upon us*; how many inſtances has experience made known to us of perſons, who have been reduced by viciſſitudes of no unuſual nature to diſtreſs! How frequent is the call upon chriſtian charity urged in public no leſs than in private, on behalf of individuals who have ſeen better days! By fires, or by inundations, by the misfortunes of perſons with whom partnerſhips or other connections had taken place, by the removal from this world, the ſudden removal, of relatives and friends, from whom protection and ſupport were wont to be derived; how many have been depreſſed from wealth or competence (and competence to them was riches) into ſcenes and ſituations

(*n*) 2 Kings, v. 20. (*o*) Jerem. xlv. 45.

where

where they ſtruggle for exiſtence! May not their lot become yours? But if Providence ſhall ſpare you the trial, if your poſſeſſions ſhall not forſake you; yet ſhall you depart from them. *We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. We have here no continuing city.* Soon ſhall our houſes of clay moulder into duſt: ſoon ſhall our earthly tabernacle be diſſolved. *Man walketh in a vain ſhadow, and diſquieteth himſelf in vain. He heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who ſhall gather them.* His life is *a vapour that paſſeth away.* In the midſt of life he is in death. He dies, and leaves all earthly things for ever.

Thirdly; reflect on the happineſs attendant on that frame of mind which, under the grace of God, is become oppoſed to the love of money. *Godlineſs with contentment is great gain.* Here is the truly rich man: the man, namely, who, being conformed in his own heart to the ſpirit which reigned in the Apoſtles, when, *having nothing*, they felt themſelves *as poſſeſſing all things*, is prepared from his own experience to teſtify that *a man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth*, but in peace with God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Seeking firſt the kingdom of God and His righteouſneſs,*

neſs, he leaves all other things to be added in greater or in leſs abundance, as the Divine Wiſdom may ordain. *If riches encreaſe, he ſets not his heart upon them.* Do the ſources of proſperity fail? He has bleſſed the Lord who gave: he bleſſes the Lord who takes away. Adminiſtering, as a faithful ſteward of the Moſt High, the worldly goods, be they more or fewer, which are entruſted to him; neglecting no office of honeſt induſtry to which he is called by his ſtation in life; he is inwardly detached from earthly acquiſitions. He counts as his treaſure not his poſſeſſions, but his inheritance. His treaſure is in Heaven; and there alſo is his heart.

Fourthly. Meditate on the final condition to which the lover of money is haſtening. The *covetous*, the man who is under the dominion of the love of money, *ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God.* In the preſent life he has a foretaſte of the fruits of his ſin. He is reſtleſs, anxious, diſſatisfied: at one time harraſſed by uncertainty as to the probable reſult of his projects; at another, ſoured by the failure of them; at another, diſappointed in the midſt of ſucceſs by diſcerning, too late, that the ſame exertions employed in ſome other line of advantage

would have been more productive. But ſuppoſe him to have been, through life, as free from the effects of theſe ſources of vexation as the moſt favourable picture could repreſent him. *He ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God.* He may not have been a miſer; but he was a lover of money. He may not have been an extortioner; but he was a lover of money. He may not have been fraudulent; but he was a lover of money. *He ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God.* He has had his day and his object. He has ſought, and he may have accumulated, earthly poſſeſſions. By their inſtrumentality he may have gratified many other appetites and deſires. But he did not ſeek firſt the kingdom of God; therefore he ſhall not obtain it. He *loved the world*; therefore he *ſhall periſh with the world.* He has wilfully bartered his ſoul for money. In vain is he now aghaſt at his former madneſs. In vain does he now deteſt the idol which he worſhipped. The gate of ſalvation is cloſed againſt him. He inherits the bitterneſs of unavailing remorſe, the horrors of eternal death.

Laſtly. Study to exalt your conceptions of the glories of that everlaſting abode, for admiſſion into which the victory over the love of money is an indiſpenſable qualifica-

tion. Never can you exalt them by the moſt earneſt and perſevering efforts to a height bearing any aſſignable proportion to the unſeen reality. The glimpſes of light which you diſcern will always be fainter than the dimneſs of twilight in compariſon with the ſplendour of the meridian ſun. Yet neglect not any additional ray, by which the eye of faith, ſteadfaſtly fixing itſelf on futurity, is cheered. Why did St. Paul ſupplicate without ceaſing for the Epheſians, that, having *their underſtanding enlightened*, they might *know what is the hope of their calling, and what are the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the ſaints?* In order that a higher ſenſe of the value of the things which are eternal might depreſs the imaginary worth of things temporal. If you habituate yourſelf to an admiring contemplation of the kingdom of God, can you be a lover of earth? Can you be a lover of money? Remember, when you feel your affections fixing themſelves upon money, at what a price you are purchaſing it.

Go forth then, my brethren, to your poſſeſſions, your occupations, your enjoyments, under a ſolid and practical conviction, that there is not any ſin whoſe allurements are more generally ſucceſsful than the love of

money; and that there is not any additional ſin, into which that paſſion may not entice you. Go forth, and aſk yourſelves from time to time what *it ſhall profit a man to gain the whole world and loſe his own ſoul*; and what *he ſhall give in exchange for his ſoul.* With what energy did our Saviour expreſs the dangers of wealth, the temptations which it brings to *truſt in* it, to prize it, and to love it, when he exclaimed; *How hardly ſhall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!* A little money may be wealth to you. Think not that you ſhall not love money becauſe you abound in it. On that very account you may love it the more. Think not that you are ſecured againſt the love of it by poverty. You may be as covetous in an humble line of life reſpecting a cottage, as you would have been in a higher ſphere reſpecting a palace; as graſping for an acre as you would have been for a kingdom. Look to your heart. If your heart be ſet on money, whether it be on a greater or on a leſs amount, there is no difference as to principle. You are governed by the love of money, the root of all evil; and involved, with all other covetous men, in the ſentence of not having any part in the inheritance of the righteous. *Love not the world, neither the things*

things that are in the world. If you love *the luſt of the fleſh*, or *the luſt of the eyes*, or *the pride of life*; you will love money by which they are procured. Aim not at an impoſſible compromiſe between the love of money and religion. *You cannot ſerve God and Mammon.* Uſe your worldly wealth; but *uſe it as not abuſing it. Beware, leſt when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy ſilver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou haſt is multiplied, then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God; and thou ſay in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou ſhalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.* If you *are rich, truſt not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy:* do good, be rich in good works ready *to diſtribute, willing to communicate* (*p*). If you have little, do your diligence gladly to give of that little. Remember the widow's mite. But cheriſh not the vain idea that liberality to the afflicted can make amends for offences againſt God. The *fervent charity* which *ſhall cover the multitude of ſins*, is the love that throws a veil over the infirmities and offences of others; not the bounty

(*p*) Deut. viii. 11—17. 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18.

which preſumes to think of making atonement for iniquity (*q*). There is no atonement but in the blood of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. *Provide yourſelves bags which wax not old, a treaſure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth* (*r*). *Be faithful in the unrighteous Mammon.* Let that gold, which is ſo frequently the ſource and the inſtrument of iniquity, be ſo conſcientiouſly employed at all times by you to the glory of God through His beloved Son, that when you ſhall be ſummoned to render up your account of your ſtewardſhip, you may give it with joy, and receive *the true riches* (*s*), the glories of the future world. Hide not the talent in a napkin. Bury it not in the earth. Occupy with it in your Maſter's ſervice until He come. But as you value your eternal intereſts, love it not.

(*q*) 1 Pet. iv. 8. See the parallel paſſage, whence St. Peter probably quoted, Prov. x. 12, *Hatred ſtirreth up ſtrife, but love covereth all ſins.*

(*r*) Luke, xii. 33. (*s*) Luke, xxi. 31.

SER-

SERMON IX.

On the SACRIFICE of WORLDLY INTEREST to DUTY.

2 CHRON. XXV. 9.

And Amaziah ſaid to the Man of God; "But "what ſhall we do for the Hundred Talents, "which I have given to the Army of Iſrael?" And the Man of God anſwered; "The Lord "is able to give thee much more than this."

HE who, under the grace of God, would ſhew himſelf diſentangled from the love of money, is required in that branch of duty, as in every other, to prove his faith by his works. He muſt be prepared to make ſacrifices of money to conſcience. Is the man then, who ſacrifices money, money to a very large amount, and in obedience to the command of God, aſcertained to be a ſervant of God? The hiſtory of Amaziah will throw light on the enquiry.

Amaziah ſucceeded to the kingdom of Judah upon the death of his father Joaſh.

After he had eſtabliſhed himſelf upon the throne, and had deſtroyed the murderers of his predeceſſor, he prepared to make war upon the people of Edom, who had revolted. For this purpoſe he aſſembled all his forces. But being doubtful whether they were ſufficient for the undertaking, and having determined to make the conqueſt of Edom certain, he hired to his aſſiſtance an army of an hundred thouſand men of Iſrael; and paid them in advance one hundred talents of ſilver. In hiring theſe Iſraelites the king acted raſhly and preſumptuouſly. For, in the firſt place, he *enquired not of the Lord* (*a*) upon the occaſion. He ſought not, as upon concerns of importance David and the other religious kings of Judah had conſtantly ſought, thoſe ſpecial directions from God, which, under the exiſting diſpenſation, a diſpenſation, into the texture of which miracles were interwoven, were always to be obtained by an immediate reference to the Moſt High before His altar. And in the next place, he knew that the people of Iſrael had long been open idolaters: and that the heavieſt calamities had

(*a*) Judges, xx. 27. 1 Sam. xxii. 20. xxiii. 2. 4. xxx. viii. 2 Sam. ii. 1. v. 19, 23. xxi. 1. 2 Kings, xvi. 15. 1 Chron. x. 14. xxi. 30.

fallen

fallen upon his own anceſtors in conſequence of connections which they had formed with idolatrous Iſrael. Could he then look for the Divine bleſſing upon this proceeding? Had he not reaſon to expect that his ſinful miſconduct would be made the inſtrument of his puniſhment? God however, in great mercy, afforded to Amaziah both opportunity and encouragement to ſtop ſhort in the evil courſe on which he had entered. He ſent a prophet to reprove and to warn the king. *There came a Man of God to him, ſaying,* " *O King, let not the army of Iſrael go* " *with thee; for the Lord is not with Iſrael, to* " *wit, with all the children of Ephraim. But* " *if thou wilt go, do it; be ſtrong for the battle.* " *God ſhall make thee fall before the enemy:* " *for God hath power to help and to caſt down.*" Amaziah was confounded at the meſſage. He could not venture to retain the Iſraelites to go with him to the war, when he was thus aſſured that his own deſtruction would be the conſequence. But he was far from poſſeſſing that ſingleneſs of heart, that true and lively faith, which would have taught him to obey the command of God inſtantly and cheerfully, whatever preſent ſacrifice might be inſeparable from obedience. His heart hankered after the money which he had advanced,

advanced. Was that to be relinquiſhed? If not, how was it to be recovered? If compliance with the Divine will would not have coſt him any thing, he would readily have obeyed. But an expenſive proof of obedience was required. He pondered therefore, and heſitated. *Amaziah ſaid to the Man of God*; "*But what ſhall we do for the hundred* "*talents, which I have given to the army of* "*Iſrael?*" *And the Man of God anſwered*; "*The Lord is able to give thee much more* "*than this.*"

With the view of making, under the bleſſing of God, a profitable application of this portion of ſacred hiſtory; let us firſt conſider for our encouragement ſome of the different ways in which God, whenever he calls upon us to make a ſacrifice for his ſake, can give us abundantly more than the poſſeſſion, be it what it may, with which he requires us to part: and afterwards attend to ſome of the warnings which the ſubject will be found to furniſh.

I. *The Lord is able to give thee much more than this.* God, who is Lord of the whole earth, has the earth and every thing which it contains at his diſpoſal. *Every beaſt of the foreſt is His*, and ſo are *the cattle upon a thouſand*

ſand hills. The ſilver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts (*b*). All the treaſures which the hand of man has dug out of the ground, all the riches which remain hidden in their ſubterranean concealment, are the Lord's: and He giveth them to whomſoever He will. Does he call upon you then to make a ſacrifice of ſome of your property, or of ſome lucrative proſpect, for His ſake? He is able to give you ten thouſand times more. He is able to fill your fields with cattle, and your barns with corn; to proſper all your undertakings beyond the utmoſt ſtretch of your hopes; to cauſe wealth to flow in upon you from quarters the moſt unpromiſing, and by ways wholly unforeſeen. It is He alone alſo who can exalt to honour. *And them, the Lord ſaith, who honour Me, I will honour* (*c*). He could at once have extended the dominions of Amaziah to the wideſt bounds promiſed to the children of Iſrael: from Lebanon to the confines of Egypt; from the Weſtern Sea to the great river Euphrates. He could have rendered this king an object of reſpect, of admiration, of dread, to all the ſurrounding nations. At the preſent hour all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them, are at the diſ-

(*b*) Pſalm, l. 10. Hagg. ii. 8. (*c*) 1 Sam. ii. 30.

poſal

poſal of our exalted Saviour. All power in heaven and in earth is given unto Him. Every article in which worldly proſperity conſiſts, every event which contributes to worldly greatneſs, every outward circumſtance in any reſpect advantageous to men, is in His hands. Well, therefore, mayeſt thou be aſſured, that whatever thou lendeſt to the Lord, by reſigning it for His ſake, He is able beyond meaſure to overpay thee again.

But when you part with ſome profit, or loſe ſome preſent intereſt, for the ſake of God, He is able, without giving you riches, abundantly to overpay you for your loſs, by beſtowing upon you comfort in the portion which you have remaining. If rebellious Edom continue unſubdued, how large a remuneration for the hundred talents may Amaziah receive from God, under the form of encreaſed ſatisfaction in the government of his original territories! *A man's life*, a man's happineſs, *conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a ſtalled ox, and hatred therewith. Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treaſure and trouble therewith* (*d*). Happineſs depends on the ſtate of the mind. *Godlineſs with content-*

(*d*) Luke, xii. 15. Prov. xv. 16, 17.

ment

ment is great gain (*e*). Where there is contentment, flowing from moderated deſires, and from peace of conſcience through the blood of a Redeemer; he who has food and raiment may be as happy as the wealthieſt and moſt powerful of the earth. God can vouchſafe to you contentment. He can put His fear into your heart. He can give you peace with Him through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Delivering you from the temptations of wealth, by mercifully denying to you the poſſeſſion of; it he can grant you ſuch heartfelt ſatisfaction in your little portion, as the rich men of the world never know. He can brace your limbs with health, and make your ſleep refreſhing by labour. He can crown you with comfort in your wife and in your children. He can cheer you with the ſociety of chriſtian friends. He can teach you by ſteady experience that the heart of the righteous, however ſmall may be his poſſeſſions, *is a continual feaſt.*

But farther. However great, according to human eſtimation, may be the ſacrifices which you have made for the ſake of God, He can abundantly overpay you for them, as under correſponding circumſtances He could have overpaid Amaziah, even while

(*e*) 1 Tim. vi. 6.

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He may ſee fit to allow numerous and heavy afflictions to preſs upon you. To what ſacrifices were not the early Chriſtians called? Were not they called to the ſacrifice of every preſent poſſeſſion, and to the endurance for righteouſneſs' ſake of the moſt cruel ſufferings? Yet, what is our Lord's declaration? *Verily I ſay unto you, There is no man that hath left houſe, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My ſake and the Goſpel's; but he ſhall receive an hundred-fold now, in this time, houſes, and brethren, and ſiſters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with perſecutions* (*f*). He ſhall receive now, even in this preſent time, and in the midſt of unceaſing perſecutions, a recompenſe which ſhall give him an hundred-fold more delight than he could have derived from eaſe and ſecurity, from worldly riches, and even from the moſt dear and tender connections. He ſhall poſſeſs joy in the Holy Ghoſt. He ſhall have that peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding. He ſhall rejoice in Jeſus Chriſt as his Saviour. He ſhall exult in the proſpect of dwelling to eternity *in My preſence*, ſaith the Lord, *where there is fulneſs of joy, and at My*

(*f*) Mark, x. 29, 30. Luke, xviii. 29, 30.

right

right hand, where there are pleaſures for evermore.

To conclude this branch of the ſubject. Whatever God may grant, or whatever with equal goodneſs he may withhold, or withdraw, from His faithful ſervant, while that ſervant continues in the body: every ſacrifice made for the ſake of God in this ſtate of trial ſhall be overpaid in the world to come; and overpaid in a meaſure which neither language can deſcribe, nor imagination attain. *In the world to come life everlaſting!* Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him! He alone who knows our nature, our inherent helpleſsneſs and corruption, and the particular temptations which each individual reſpectively would find it the moſt difficult to withſtand, knows what ſtation of life, what courſe of events, will be the moſt beneficial to each of his ſervants. He alone who ſurveys at one view the paſt, the preſent, and the future, knows in what ſtation of life and under what courſe of events each of His ſervants will moſt efficaciouſly anſwer the great purpoſes and plans of His Univerſal Providence. To this man He ſees that riches may properly be vouchſafed: from another He knows

knows that it is fitting to withhold them. The one He bleſſes by giving: the other by denying or by taking away. This man He appoints to magnify the Divine mercy in proſperity: that, to glorify His Lord by ſuffering. But whether the bleſſing beſtowed in the preſent world on His ſervants ſhall have been wealth or poverty, honour or diſhonour, eaſe or tribulation; the end which awaits them all is the ſame. *In the world to come life everlaſting!* They have filled the ſtations upon earth to which Infinite Wiſdom appointed them. They have ſerved the Lord in their generation under the different circumſtances in which, for their good and for His glory, He choſe reſpectively to place them. They have paſſed, under the guidance and in the ſtrength of His grace, through the various modes of trial and purification, by which He led them onward to Himſelf. They have waſhed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They have now died in the Lord, and are bleſſed. They reſt from their labours, and their works do follow them. Juſtified by faith, ſanctified by grace, they are now perfected in glory. Whatever ſacrifices they may have ſuſtained for the ſake of God and their Redeemer, they now find the full extent of the aſſurance, *The Lord is able to give thee much more.*

more than this. They now experience in happineſs inexpreſſible that the hope by which they were encouraged while on earth was a hope which *maketh not aſhamed* (*g*); that it was not in vain that they reckoned, that the ſufferings of the preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed. *Their light afflictions*, which were *but for a moment*, have worked for them a far *more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. For they looked *not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen*. They felt that *the things which are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen are eternal.*

Such are the encouragements, which the reply of the man of God to Amaziah may ſuggeſt to us.

And which, you aſk, of the encouragements, pertaining to the preſent life, were verified to Amaziah? Perhaps you may learn in the moſt uſeful manner the anſwer to this queſtion, by turning your attention to the warnings, which the ſubject affords.

II. The hiſtory of the King of Judah warns us, when we are impelled to any undertaking by proſpects of worldly profit, to ſtudy in the firſt inſtance the will of God concerning

(*g*) Rom. v. 5.

it. It warns us, if the undertaking be found conformable to His will, to purſue it by ſuch methods only as are agreeable to His good pleaſure: if it be contrary to his will, to abandon our purpoſe at once. The original falſe ſtep of Amaziah, the ſtep which led him into all the difficulties that followed, was the hiring of the army of the Iſraelites without *enquiring of the Lord*. Their aſſiſtance he regarded as enſuring victory; and graſped at the ſuppoſed advantage at once. Be admoniſhed by the example. But perhaps you will reply; "I know not in what manner I "am to accommodate the example to my- "ſelf. My ſituation is very different from "that of the King of Judah; ſo different "that there is no reſemblance, no analogy, "between them. Amaziah was bleſſed with "an opportunity of ſolemnly ſeeking coun- "ſel from God Himſelf, in the appointed "method, by the mouth of the High Prieſt. "And if he had thus laid the matter before "the Lord, he would have received ſpecific "directions for his own conduct. But in "the preſent day God does not thus re- "ſolve the queſtions of man. How am "I to learn whether my propoſed un- "dertaking will be pleaſing to Him?"

You

You are to learn His will concerning it by making uſe of thoſe means, by which He enables His ſervants in the preſent day to diſcover it. "What," you aſk, "are thoſe "means? Am I to open my bible at ran-"dom, and to conſider the paſſage of Scrip-"ture on which my eye may fix as an an-"ſwer from God on the ſubject?" Undoubtedly not. Where do you find in the word of God any command or any encouragement to ſuch a practice? Do you expect that God ſhall work a miracle to guide your eye to a ſuitable paſſage? And if he does not, is it not wholly a chance on what verſe your eye ſhall ſettle? To enquire thus into the will of God is abſurd, ſuperſtitious, and enthuſiaſtical: and however pious may be the perſons who have been deluded into it, for unhappily it is not to be denied that ſuch have been known to adopt it, it is in truth a vain and preſumptuous attempt to divine by the Scriptures. "Am I then, when I lay "the buſineſs before God in prayer, to look "upon any ſtriking thoughts or any empha-"tical words reſpecting it which ariſe in "my mind during my devotions, as an an-"ſwer to my ſupplications, and as a direction "from above?" Certainly not. Where is the paſſage in Holy Writ, which authoriſes you

to regard thoughts and words ariſing in your mind during prayer as an anſwer to your doubts, a communication of the will of God? Such ideas have no warrant in the Goſpel. They are viſionary; they are enthuſiaſtic; they may be inſtrumental to the groſſeſt deluſion. "What then am I to do? What "is the method in which I am now to ſearch "whether my purpoſe be pleaſing to God, "or not?" In the firſt place, Pray fervently to God in the name of your Redeemer, that He would enable you to diſcern the true nature of the meaſure which you have in view, and of the motives which incline you to engage in it; and that he would grant you grace cheerfully and immediately to lay aſide every wiſh, every thought, of purſuing it, if it ſhould prove on full examination to be your duty to give it up. Then take a diſtinct and impartial ſurvey of your propoſed undertaking. Conſider whether there appears a reaſonable proſpect that it will ſucceed. Conſider whether ſucceſs in it will be likely to promote on the whole the glory of God, the good of your neighbour, the religious intereſts of yourſelf and your family. If your undertaking be evidently likely to have theſe conſequences; you may conclude, that it is acceptable to God. If it is not evidently probable that theſe conſequences

will

will follow; you may conclude, whatever be the worldly advantage which the meaſure under contemplation may promiſe, that the will of God is, that you ſhould lay it aſide.

Again; we are admoniſhed, by the words of the Prophet, how great is the ſin, how fatal will be the reſult, of a refuſal to make any ſacrifice, however large, of preſent intereſt which an enlightened conſcience requires.

Away with difficulties, with reſerves, with demurs, with parleys, with reluctance. Heſitate not a moment. What ingratitude towards God, to be averſe to relinquiſh for his ſake ſome advantage, ſome worldly proſpect, which he calls upon you to renounce; while he is every day and every hour crowning you with numberleſs benefits, and for your ſake gave up His beloved Son to death on the croſs! What daring rebellion againſt His ſovereign authority, to cling to ſome gainful object of the moment, when He commands you to abandon it! What ſhameful diſtruſt of His goodneſs, to hold faſt ſome forbidden intereſt, when He promiſes to beſtow upon you abundantly more! Apply theſe conſiderations to your tranſactions in common life. Are you purſuing your occupation in any unrighteous way? Are you graſping at money in your buſineſs by injuſtice, by over-reaching, by

artifice? Forſake every ſuch practice, and turn to the Lord your God. Relinquiſhing all ſuch gain, walk honeſtly in the Lord Jeſus: He is able to beſtow upon you *much more*. Are you flying in the face of His laws; carrying on your worldly calling on the Sabbath; and profeſſing that you cannot lay aſide the practice, leſt your profit ſhould be transferred to others who have no ſcruples of conſcience? Obey the commandment of your God, and hallow His ſacred day. Provoke Him not by breaking its holy reſt. If your profit depends on ſetting God at defiance, give it up, be it what it may. Give it up, if apparently it be your whole livelihood. *The Lord is able to give thee much more than this.* But if you will not take warning, proceed. If you *will be rich; be ſtrong for the battle.* Go on week after week in covetouſneſs, in extortion, in deceit! Go on week after week to profane the day which the moſt High has reſerved to Himſelf. *God ſhall make thee fall; for God hath power to help and to caſt down.* You ſhall find the wealth which you gain by covetouſneſs, by extortion, by deceit, by profaning the day of the Lord, a ſnare and a curſe to you. You ſhall find it eat into your peace and ſafety like a canker.

Farther; when you promiſe to yourſelf a recom-

recompenſe at the hand of the Lord for ſacrifices which you have made for His ſake, neglect not the ſteps which are neceſſary in order to obtain it. What are thoſe ſteps? Learn from the hiſtory of Amaziah. When the Prophet exhorted him to ſubmit to the loſs of the hundred talents, rather than diſobey God; he complied. "And no doubt the Lord God," you anſwer, "repaid him moſt amply for the loſs." God gave him the victory over the Edomites: but permitted the Iſraelites, who were highly enraged at their diſmiſſion, to ſeize the opportunity which the King's abſence on his expedition againſt Edom opened to their revenge. They attacked the cities of Judah, ſlaughtered ſeveral thouſands of the inhabitants, and carried away abundance of valuable ſpoil. "And for this "additional loſs, this unexpected and very "diſtreſſing trial, Amaziah was aſſuredly re-"compenſed in a moſt ſignal manner by the "Lord. In proportion as a life beyond the "grave was in thoſe days obſcurely revealed, "great rewards in the preſent world were "beſtowed upon the righteous. Amaziah "therefore, we may preſume, reigned "in eminent wealth and honour on the "throne of David, bleſſed with proſpe-"rity at home, triumphant over all his ene-

" mies abroad." Quite the contrary. Joaſh the King of Iſrael conquered him in battle; took him priſoner; plundered him of all his treaſures; and broke down the walls of Jeruſalem. And afterwards, the ſubjects of Amaziah conſpired againſt him; and when he fled from them for his life, they followed him to Lachiſh, and there ſlew him. " But " whence," you aſk, " was this unexpected " reſult. The hundred talents were reſigned; " yet Amaziah lives in calamity, and dies by " violence and treaſon! Did the Lord God, " the God of goodneſs and truth, forſake " His ſervant?" No. The Lord forſook Amaziah, becauſe Amaziah drew back from being His ſervant. Amaziah, when he had deſtroyed the Edomites, brought with him to Jeruſalem their idols; and with the infatuation which belongs to preſumptuous wickedneſs, ſet them up to be his gods, and burned incenſe to them, and worſhipped them. Yet the ſword of divine juſtice pauſed in its ſcabbard. *Where ſin abounded, grace much more abounded.* The Lord Jehovah, inſtead of immediately cutting off the King in the midſt of his ingratitude and impiety, was mercifully pleaſed again to ſend a prophet to rebuke him and call him to repentance. And *the prophet ſaid unto him*; " *Why haſt thou*

ſought

ſought after the gods of the people of Edom, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand (*i*)*?*" How did the King receive the meſſage from God? When the former prophet had delivered his meſſage, Amaziah obeyed the command. Did he now humble himſelf before His Maker? Mark how obſtinately his heart was fixed in apoſtacy. He charged the prophet with inſolent obtruſiveneſs for daring to reprove him: and ordered him to be ſilent on pain of puniſhment. *The King ſaid unto him*; "*Art thou* "*made of the King's counſel? Forbear. Why* "*ſhouldſt thou be ſmitten?*" Then the prophet, perceiving him not to be reclaimed, pronounced his doom. "*I know that God hath* "*determined to deſtroy thee, becauſe thou haſt* "*done this, and haſt not hearkened unto my* "*counſel.*" Hence followed the diſaſtrous reſidue of his life, and his miſerable end. Learn from this example that no former acts of righteouſneſs, no former ſacrifices of preſent intereſt for conſcience-ſake, will avail you as an excuſe for indulging afterwards in ſin. If you would reap the rewards which are provided through the blood of Chriſt for thoſe former acts of righteouſneſs, for thoſe former ſacrifices; ſeek the grace of the Holy

(*i*) 2 Chron. xxv. 15, 16.

Spirit that you may continue a conſiſtent and zealous ſervant of your God and Redeemer to the end of your life. Truſt not in ſtrength of your own. How were you turned unto God from your original corruption? Entirely by the renewing influence of His Spirit. How are you to be enabled to perſevere? Entirely by the operation of the ſame Sanctifier. But I *beſeech you*, my brethren, *that ye receive not his grace in vain.* Be not you *of the number of thoſe who draw back unto perdition. If any man draw back, My ſoul*, ſaith the Lord, *ſhall have no pleaſure in him. When I ſay to the righteous that he ſhall ſurely live; if he truſt to his own righteouſneſs and commit iniquity, all his righteouſneſs ſhall not be remembered, but for his iniquity that he hath committed he ſhall die for it. When the righteous turneth away from his righteouſneſs and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, ſhall he live? All his righteouſneſs that he hath done ſhall not be mentioned: in his treſpaſs that he hath treſpaſsed, and in his ſin that he hath ſinned, in them ſhall he die* (*k*).

(*k*) 2 Cor. vi. 1. Hebr. x. 38, 39. Ezek. xxxiii. 13. xviii. 24.

SER-

SERMON X.

On CHRISTIAN BOUNTY.

DEUT. XV. 11.

Thou ſhalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy.

THE word of God, ſolicitous, while it commands obedience, to approve its precepts to the underſtanding, very frequently accompanies the injunction with a brief remark ſuggeſting the reaſonableneſs of the duty. How manifeſt is the obligation to love God, when we are inſtructed to *love Him becauſe He firſt loved us* (*a*)! How equitable the love of man, when we read that, *if God ſo loved us, we ought alſo to love one another* (*b*)! How ſatisfactory the argument for univerſal forgiveneſs of injuries: *Even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do ye* (*c*)! How deciſive the plea for the reception of

(*a*) 1 John, iv. 19. (*b*) 1 John, iv. 11. (*c*) Col. iii. 13.

the

the ſtranger as a brother: *The Lord loveth the ſtranger in giving him food and raiment: love ye therefore the ſtranger* (*d*). How obvious to the man who feels the truth of the introductory memento, *The Lord thy God bleſſeth thee* (*e*), is the duty of opening the hand wide to the brethren, to the poor, to the needy!

What then if, for an inſtant, we might ſuſpend the obligation to Chriſtian bounty, in our own caſe, on the truth of that introductory memento as applicable to ourſelves? What if, placing out of ſight every other paſſage in the Scriptures which can be ſuppoſed to bear, either in the way of commandment or of exemplification, upon the duty, we reſt the authority of the precept before us as to ourſelves, the authority of the only precept, according to our preſent aſſumption, which prefers a claim to our regard on the ſubject of bounty, upon the reſult of the enquiry, Has the Lord our God bleſſed us? Be it allowed, for a moment, there to reſt it! Has the Lord our God bleſſed us? Be the enquiry propoſed. What is he who ſuggeſts it? What are they to whom it is ſuggeſted? My brethren; What are we? We are intelligent beings; beings formed out of nothing; beings in-

(*d*) Deut. x. 17—19. (*e*) Deut. xv. 6.

veſted

veſted with capacities for various kinds and modes of happineſs; beings placed in a world furniſhed with objects correſponding to theſe capacities; beings thus created, thus endowed, thus ſtationed, by the ſpontaneous bounty of God. We are rebellious beings, on whom God, of His own free and immeaſurable goodneſs, has had mercy: whom He has *ſo loved*, that He *ſent His ſon to be the propitiation for our ſins*, to *redeem us by His blood*; *gave His only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in Him ſhould not periſh, but ſhould have everlaſting life* (*f*). Let us advance to particulars. We have been brought into the world not in the days of ancient obſcurity, when the Sun of Righteouſneſs had not yet ariſen to enlighten the gloom, but in the ſeaſon of His meridian luſtre: not in a region yet lying in the ſhadow of death, overſpread with Pagan or Mahometan darkneſs; not in a land where the beams of the Goſpel are dimmed and repelled by the miſts of Popiſh ſuperſtition; but in a country where they ſhine at large, and ſhine with primeval purity. We are inhabitants, not of a land where deſpotiſm tramples on the rights of millions, or anarchy levels all things in miſery; but of a

(*f*) John, iii. 16. 1 John, iv. 10. Rev. v. 9.

realm

realm flouriſhing, under the influence of civil liberty, in a profuſion elſewhere unknown of earthly advantages. What, for many paſt years, has been our ſituation? We have been ſpectators, uninjured, eſſentially uninjured, ſpectators, of the tempeſt which has deſolated the face of Europe. While the Continent has been changed into a field of ſlaughter, our own iſland has been unſullied with blood. On that element, on which unequivocal ſuperiority has apparently been indiſpenſable to our ſafety, our arms have been crowned with invariable and unexampled triumphs. When the wiſdom of Providence has ſeen fit to teach us by defeat *to know ourſelves to be but men* (*g*); it has been by defeat on a foreign ſoil, by defeat where the vital ſtrength of our country was not committed, by defeat whence no radical injury to ourſelves has enſued, by defeat in gallant efforts to uphold thoſe whom the Divine Will, diſcloſed by the events of ſucceeding years, had conſigned to ſubjugation. What is our ſituation at this hour? The menaces, the plans, the gigantic power, the diffuſive combinations of our enemies, have not been permitted to prevail. Our laws and inſtitutions are yet ſecure. Our territory is yet inviolate.

(*g*) Pſalm ix. 20.

Our

Our country is yet maintained erect amidſt the overthrow of nations; a column among ruins; an oak untouched amidſt the downfall of the foreſt. Theſe are general and public bleſſings. How many private mercies, vouchſafed to ourſelves individually, may each of us add to the account! Let us contemplate theſe facts, and anſwer the enquiry; Has the Lord our God bleſſed us? Let us contemplate theſe facts, and anſwer individually, each of us for himſelf, whether we ought not to open our hand wide unto our brother, to the poor, and to the needy.

The preceding view of the caſe may illuſtrate the energy with which the general obligation to Chriſtian bounty preſſes, in conſequence of ſpecial circumſtances, upon every one of us. Let it not however be ſuppoſed that it is only under the reception of extraordinary bleſſings that the motive which has been adduced is applicable: or that the ſimple precept, independently of any reference to any bleſſing, public or private, which we have received, would not have been of itſelf concluſive. When the Lord of heaven and earth vouchſafes to ſubjoin a reaſon for his commandments; let us receive with gratitude the light thus poured upon them. But let us not forget that our obli-

gation to obedience is complete in the ſimple truth; *This is the will of God* (*h*).

On the ſubject of Chriſtian bounty the will of God is amply revealed. Not only is the general duty preſcribed or implied in numerous paſſages of Scripture, but the nature of it is elucidated by particular directions. The general duty is a branch of that mutual love, by which all the diſciples of Chriſt are to be characteriſed. It is one of the ſubdiviſions of the command, *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.* If thou in thy diſtreſs wouldeſt deſire that the hand of brotherhood ſhould be opened wide unto thee; open thou thine hand wide to thy brother, to the poor, and to the needy.

The meaſure of bounty is diſtinctly ſpecified in the New Teſtament. What is that meaſure? A meaſure evidently moſt reaſonable moſt equitable: the ability of the individual. Bounty, the outward manifeſtation of *the willing mind, is accepted* of God *according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not* (*i*).

By whom is the ability of an individual to be eſtimated? By himſelf. In determining the due amount, and the moſt beneficial application, of his gifts, he will gladly profit, if

(*h*) 1 Theſſ. iv. 3. (*i*) 2 Cor. viii. 12.

he

he be wiſe, by the ſuggeſtions of ſalutary counſel. But bounty, in its eſſence a voluntary act, loſes its nature if ſtretched or compreſſed by compulſory dictates of another man's judgement.

By what criterion is he to eſtimate his ability? This queſtion, the anſwer to which ſeems, on the firſt view, to imply no more than the recollection of plain facts neceſſarily known to the individual, may on that account appear needleſs and ſtrange. It is a queſtion, however, which many men neither propoſe to themſelves with frequency and diſtinctneſs; nor when they do propoſe it to themſelves, anſwer on chriſtian grounds.

The man who ſhuts himſelf up in cold penuriouſneſs thinks not of Chriſtian bounty, or thinks of it only to evade it. His ability to beſtow, as the meaſure of the duty of beſtowing, he wiſhes not to inveſtigate. He would gladly perſuade himſelf, if the ſubject be forced upon him, of his inability. His poſſeſſions are ever in his mind; not however as articles to be diſpenſed, but as objects to be retained and augmented. A grain from his heap he is at times compelled by circumſtances to contribute. A grain he may occaſionally give under a tranſient alarm of conſcience; and may put it down to an ideal

account of atonement for tranſgreſſion. A grain he may now and then impart under the momentary impulſe of feeling; and may regard himſelf with complacency as having performed a deed of unſolicited and needleſs liberality. But his heart is ſet upon his idol. He muſt turn from his idol to the living and true God, he muſt love the Lord his God with all his heart, before he will earneſtly begin to enquire; "How much for the ſake of my God "am I able to beſtow upon man?"

Conſider perſons of another claſs: perſons not particularly defective in benevolence, placed in eaſy or in affluent circumſtances, and in a meaſure accuſtomed to form, though perhaps at diſtant periods, ſome eſtimate of their own ability, and of their conſequent duty, as to a more or a leſs extended exerciſe of beneficence. Is an error in their calculations common? Very common. From what ſource does it proceed? From an error in the principle on which their computation reſts. They take their courſe of life as it is, inſtead of taking it as it ought to be. In arranging their general plan of proceedings, in deciding as to the adoption of habits, in the adjuſtment of propoſed expenditure to income, they do not note down Chriſtian bounty, correſpondent in its regular amount to the talents

lents entruſted to their ſtewardſhip, as an original, a conſpicuous, and a leading item. They do not deliberately exclude it. They do not purpoſely diſmiſs it from conſideration. They would allow the propriety of providing for it a place in the ſum total. But, practically, they do not aſſign to it a place among the articles, by the addition of which that ſum is compoſed. The articles which they ſpecifically note are nearly ſufficient to form without it the ſum total, not, it may be, of their annual income, but of the proportion of that income which they deem themſelves warranted in point of prudence to expend. Their ſcale of expenſes is ſettled on a ſurvey, more or leſs diſtinct, of their income, their ſtation, the cuſtoms of the neighbourhood, the faſhions of the polite world: and bounty, ſo far as it becomes an object of previous thought, is huddled up in the general maſs, with a confuſed intention that its claims ſhall in ſome way receive due regard. "Though no appropriate fund be aſſigned "to thoſe claims; yet charity is ſo com- "mendable, ſo manifeſtly right, that aſſured- "ly we ſhall not be deficient in it." Altogether deficient in charity the perſons in queſtion will not be. But what can be expected as to the ſupply of a continual demand,

for which no fund, or no adequate fund, is ſet apart? If the fountain be uncertain and ſcanty; ſhall the ſtream be perennial and plenteous? Then come unforeſeen and incidental drawbacks. Domeſtic expenſes exceed the eſtimate. A ſudden journey, or a fit of ſickneſs, or an improvement in the houſe or its appendages, drains the purſe. The ſtream of bounty intermits or declines. Yet, if blame were intimated, what would be the reply? "We do not lay up any thing; at "leaſt we lay up no more than duty to "our family requires." The fact is not diſputed. "We are frequently in difficulties "as to money." Neither is this poſition controverted. "We give away as much as "we can afford." You do give away as much as you can afford: as much as you can afford to give, *upon your preſent plan of life.* But is that plan as it ſhould be? Is it chriſtian? Is it chriſtian if, out of the poſſeſſions which God has committed into your hands, it leaves you merely the preſent portion for bounty? Is it a plan in which, if you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbour as yourſelf; is it a plan in which, if you are anxious to live unto the Lord Jeſus Chriſt who died for you, and has commanded you to miniſter unto his neceſſitous

ſitous brethren as to himſelf, you can perſevere? It is not that you are required to ſell all that you have, and to give the produce to the poor. It is not that you are commanded to throw your wealth into a common ſtock with the poverty of your indigent neighbours. It is not that you are exhorted to caſt away comforts, and pare off every reaſonable indulgence. Let the diſtinctions of ſociety be preſerved: for God hath appointed them. Let innocent gratifications be enjoyed: for the enjoyment of them in moderation God approves. But let it not be forgotten, that we are ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth. Let us dread that ſolicitude for accommodations and indulgences on our way, which deadens our hearts to the diſtreſs of our fellow travellers, or diſables us from contributing uniformly and largely to its relief. Let charity be ever conſidered in the arrangement of your yearly expenditure, and conſidered, for the ſake of your Redeemer, as an indiſpenſable and a prominent article: as an article to be encreaſed, whether other articles be or be not encreaſed, with every augmentation of your revenue: as an article never to be ſuffered intentionally to fall ſhort of a definite proportion of that revenue. Remember alſo, that the ſcriptural meaſure of your

obligation to bounty is your reaſonable ability, not your artificial inability. The duty of opening your hand wide to your brother, to the poor, and to the needy, is not to be eſcaped by encircling your hand with voluntary ligatures, and then ſhewing to how ſmall a compaſs only it can be expanded. Reduce the external trappings of your ſtation, be it higher or lower, within the narroweſt limits which decency of appearance will authoriſe. Renounce every extravagant indulgence; be ſparing in lawful gratifications which entail expenſe. The foundation of Chriſtian bounty muſt in part be laid in Chriſtian ſelf-denial.

There is yet another claſs not free from error on the important point of ability to be bountiful. The perſons now in view have warm hearts; purpoſe to live under the influence of religion; are ſtrongly impelled both by natural feeling and by conſcience to charity; are anxious that their bounty ſhould fill the ſcriptural meaſure of their ability; but partly through an exceſſive apprehenſion of falling ſhort, or of being deemed to fall ſhort, in points of propriety, partly from a degree of love of the world ſtill lurking, though by themſelves unperceived, in their hearts, entangle themſelves in much needleſs

expenſe: and ultimately diſcover, with equal perplexity and diſtreſs, that a retrenchment muſt take place either in charitable donations, or in ordinary diſburſements. Do you diſcern this deſcription to include yourſelves? Be perſuaded that bounty demands the ſupporting hand of ſelf-denial. On your preſent plan you would reconcile incompatibilities. The one or the other of your objects muſt give way. There is no alternative. If you *will* be the votaries of cuſtom, beneficence muſt be curtailed. If you perſiſt in ſaying within yourſelves, "We muſt do as "our neighbours do: we muſt go whi-"ther our neighbours go: we muſt have "our proprieties as heretofore, our accom-"modations, our faſhions: if in another "houſe we ſee a new elegance, we ſhall be "thought ſingular or parſimonious if we "do not adopt it: if we alter our mode of "living, we ſhall be conſidered as on the "verge of ruin, and ſhall ſee ourſelves and "our children deſpiſed —:" the point is ſettled. Debts incurred will take precedence of bounties intended. The ſum on which juſtice has a claim cannot be aſſigned to charity. Break, in the ſtrengh of divine grace, your fetters. Live above the world. You are ſtewards of God. *It is required in ſtew-*

ards that a man be found faithful (*k*). To be bountiful to the poor according to the fulneſs of the meaſure ordained in the word of God is a branch of the fidelity of your ſtewardſhip. *Watch and pray that ye enter not into* former habits *of temptation. The ſpirit indeed is willing; but the fleſh is weak.*

In the next place, bounty muſt be rendered with cheerfulneſs. In the verſes which precede the text, the alacrity of the internal diſpoſition is introduced as a preliminary to the outward act of duty. *Thou ſhalt not harden thine heart, nor ſhut thine hand from thy poor brother; thou ſhalt ſurely give him, and thine heart ſhall not be grieved when thou giveſt unto him* (*l*). In the paſſage alſo in which we have been inſtructed by St. Paul that charity is accepted of God *according to that which a man hath*, a *willing mind* is premiſed as a qualification indiſpenſable to our acceptance (*m*). The ſubſequent obſervations of the apoſtle breathe the ſame ſpirit: *I thought it neceſſary to exhort the brethren that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the ſame might be ready, as a matter of bounty and not as of covetouſneſs. Every man according as he purpoſeth*

(*k*) 1 Cor. iv. 2.
(*l*) Deut. xv. 7, 10.
(*m*) 2 Cor. viii. 12.

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in his heart, ſo let him give: let the inclination of his heart prompt and accompany his hand, that his bounty may be *not grudgingly, or of neceſſity: for God loveth a cheerful giver* (*n*). If, wearied by importunity, or conſtrained by ſhame, you at length yield reluctant aid to a needy brother; do you denominate the aid bounty? Why not honour with the ſame appellation your payment to the Poor's-rate?

Are you then habitually giving according to your ability eſtimated by the ſcriptural ſtandard? Are you alſo giving with cheerfulneſs? Be not puffed up. The ability and the diſpoſition come from God. His providence furniſhes the means; His grace the inclination to employ them to His glory. *It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do. Who am I, and what is my people, that we ſhould be able to offer ſo willingly, after this ſort? For all things come of Thee; and of thine own have we given Thee* (*o*).

In eſtimating the extent of your bounty, do not deceive yourſelf. Beware leſt you range under the head of charity parts of your expenditure which belong to another title. A bridge near your reſidence is ſwept away by a flood. You ſubſcribe largely towards

(*n*) 2 Cor. ix. 5, 7.
(*o*) Philipp. ii. 13. 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

rebuild

rebuilding it. You have felt the loſs in point of commodiouſneſs. You have perceived that the view from your windows is bereaved of an ornament. Let convenience be conſulted: let reaſonable ornament be regarded. But call not the ſum which you pay for convenience, or for ornament, charity. Some military preparation connected with local or national defence is propoſed. You give an ample contribution. Any part of this ſum which you have added excluſively for the Chriſtian purpoſe of ſaving the purſes of others leſs able to bear the charge than yourſelf, is bounty. Do you apply the term to the remainder? As equitably may you apply it to the premium which you pay for the inſurance of your houſe againſt fire, or of your veſſel againſt capture. You are liberal in pecuniary allowances to your children who are become men and women. It is well. But are theſe diſburſements to be claſſed under charity? You hear yourſelf termed the friend of the poor, becauſe for years you have employed numbers in forming the artificial lake which embelliſhes your proſpect. For years they have derived ſubſiſtence for themſelves and their families from the occupation which you have furniſhed. And they would equally have obtained ſubſiſt-

ſubſiſtence, had they been employed by a public company in digging a navigable canal. Would charity have been the object in the latter caſe? Was it in the former?

In the article of liberality the rich might frequently receive a leſſon from the indigent. How often are the petty contributions of the poor to the relief of neighbouring diſtreſs ſuperior to the donations of the wealthy! How large a proportion are ſervants known to contribute out of their yearly earnings to the ſuppport of an aged parent, or to the aid of an infirm brother or ſiſter! How often is a cottager, who by his labour can ſcarcely provide day by day for his own children, ſeen to take upon himſelf the maintainance of the orphan of a relative! The charity of thoſe who occupy the humble walks of life is, at times, almoſt the repetition of the widow's mite. It is nearly *all that they have*, even *all their living*.

In the exerciſe of bounty, uſe diſcrimination. The uſe or the neglect of diſcrimination is one of the ſigns, which will tend to indicate to others the principle on which you are acting in the diſpoſal of money, and will aſſiſt you in aſcertaining it for yourſelf. If you habitually give without reflection, without enquiry into circumſtances and characters;

ters; the inference is merely, that you are careleſs as to the poſſeſſion of money. You may have good nature; but there is no proof that you have the ſpirit of charity. If you attend ſimply, though promptly, to circumſtances of diſtreſs without regard to character in the party relieved; there is a manifeſtation of amiable and compaſſionate feeling, but no evidence of ſcriptural love. If you take moral conduct into the account, but ſtop ſhort of all conſideration of Chriſtian character; you have teſtified regard for moral actions, but not for Chriſtianity. If, in addition to the aſſiſtance to which mere diſtreſs is unqueſtionably entitled; in addition alſo to the encreaſe of bounty which is rightly rendered to the claims of moral conduct; your heart dilates, and your hand opens more wide, in proportion as you are ſtrengthened in the conviction that the object of your benevolence is a ſincere ſervant of his and your Redeemer: then have you demonſtrated that your beneficence is Chriſtian charity. Then have you ſhewn that, loving your Saviour, you love his image wherever you diſcern it, and delight in relieving His brethren for His ſake. In examining therefore your proceedings as to bounty, aſk yourſelf not merely whether, to the extent of your real

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ability, you *do good unto all men*, to the poor, to your friend, to your enemy, for your enemy is your neighbour; but whether alſo you do good *ſpecially unto them who are of the houſehold of faith* (*p*). Aſk yourſelf whether you ſtudy to make the alleviation of temporal wants an introduction to the ſupply of ſpiritual neceſſities. Aſk yourſelf whether you gladly ſtretch forth a ſupporting hand to uphold any becoming meaſure, private or public, for the communication of genuine religion to an individual or to numbers, both within your own immediate vicinity, and at the extremity of the ſphere of your influence.

On the outward manner in which bounty is to be diſpenſed how inſtructive, how emphatical, is our Lord! *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.* This injunction is given to ſecure the motive, and for that purpoſe expreſsly to baniſh oſtentation. On ſome occaſions, to conceal your bounty is impracticable. In caſes of public contributions it frequently muſt *be ſeen of men.* Still the motive may be ſecure. It is ſecure, if *you do not your alms in order* (*q*) *to be ſeen*, for the purpoſe of being ſeen *of men.* It is ſecure, if the publicity be incidental, not intentional, not unneceſſary. It is ſecure if, when you *let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may*

(*p*) Gal. vi. 10. (*q*) Πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι. Matth. vi. 1.

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...Cor. viii. 9. ſee alſo 7, 8. (*t*) 2 Cor. viii. 1—5.
... Cor. ix. 13. viii. 24.

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the Corinthians, refers it to the influence of the grace of God upon their hearts. That of the Macedonians he terms, *the grace of God beſtowed on the churches of Macedonia* (*v*). That of the Corinthians he denominates, *the exceeding grace of God in you:* and with fervent gratitude ſubjoins, *Thanks be unto God for his unſpeakable gift* (*w*)! Under the preventing and accompanying influence of the grace of the Holy Spirit, let us ſhew ourſelves touched by the love, alive to the example, of our Lord. If he ſo loved us, ſhall not we love one another for his ſake? If he for our ſakes diſarrayed Himſelf of His celeſtial glory; if he bowed himſelf down to poverty and ſufferings and death, that He might exalt us to his own right hand beſide that eternal throne which in His human nature He was to reſume: ſhall we be niggards towards Him in teſtimonies of our affection, of our thankfulneſs? Shall not we rejoice to open wide our hand to our brethren and His brethren? Shall not we ſtrive to *abound more and more* in that cheerful aſſiſtance, for His ſake, to others, which He has promiſed to regard and accept as rendered to Himſelf?

Remember the words of the Lord Jeſus, how he ſaid; It is more bleſſed to give than to re-

(*v*) 2 Cor. viii. 1. (*w*) 2 Cor. ix. 14, 15.

ceive (*x*). Bleſſings in the preſent life, bleſſings beyond the grave, are enſured to thoſe who are bountiful; bountiful, that is to ſay, from the Chriſtian motive. When the divine bleſſing is pledged to attend any courſe of conduct, it is on the aſſumption that the conduct proceeds from love to God. *Otherwiſe, ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.* Let bounty be the fruit of religion; and *alms* no leſs than *prayers* ſhall *come up for a memorial before God* (*y*). *Bleſſed is he that conſidereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preſerve him, and keep him alive, and he ſhall be bleſſed upon the earth: Thou wilt not deliver him into the will of his enemies. The Lord will ſtrengthen him upon his bed of languiſhing. Thou wilt make all his bed in his ſickneſs. Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirſty, and ye gave me drink: I was a ſtranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me* (*z*). You know the reverſe of the deſcription. You know the doom of the uncharitable.

(*x*) Acts, xx. 35. (*y*) Acts, x. 4.
(*z*) Pſalm xli. 1—3. Matth. xxv. 34, 35.

My brethren, as children and ſtewards of God, objects of His love and diſpenſers of His bleſſings, may we *give all diligence* in the exerciſe of Chriſtian bounty; of bounty habitual, ample, cheerful, diſcriminating; bounty directed to the glory of God, bounty for the ſake, and according to the example, of our Redeemer. May *the Lord make us to encreaſe and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men* (*a*)!

(*a*) 1 Theſſ. iii. 12.

SER-

SERMON XI.

On Discontent.

MATTH. XX. 15.

Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?

CHRISTIAN tempers, and their oppoſites, have an intimate connection with Chriſtian Morality. The one, and of courſe the other, may be in their nature ſuch, that their immediate exerciſe can reach only to men. Thus of the Chriſtian temper, Liberality, and of its oppoſite, Covetouſneſs, man only can be the actual object. In this caſe, and in every ſimilar example, the influence of the Chriſtian or unchriſtian temper on Morality is manifeſt. There are other diſpoſitions, Chriſtian and their contraries, as humility, pride, gratitude, unthankfulneſs, of which the immediate exerciſe may be directed either towards God or towards men. When it is directed towards men,

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againſt the indulgence of a kindred ſpirit of diſcontent on any other occaſion. It is to the latter purpoſe that the parable is now to be applied.

When the labourers aſſembled in the evening to receive their wages, the owner of the Vineyard bountifully directed that a ſum the ſame with that which he had contracted to give to the perſons who had been hired early in the morning ſhould alſo be paid to the others, who had been hired at later periods of the forenoon, or in the afternoon, or even but an hour before ſunſet. This determination raiſed no inconſiderable diſcontent among the labourers who had been ſent early to the work, and who now imagined that they ſhould receive an addition to the terms for which they had bargained. Diſappointed in their expectation, *they murmured againſt the good man of the houſe, ſaying; Theſe laſt have wrought but one hour, and thou haſt made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he anſwered one of them,* ſome one who ſtood forward more clamorouſly than the reſt, *and ſaid; Friend, I do thee no wrong. Didſt not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way. I will give unto this laſt even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with*

mine own? Is thine eye evil, becauſe I am good? We may eaſily ſuppoſe the maſter, kind no leſs than juſt, to have perceived various motives, which might well induce a man of ſuch principles to act as he had done. Perhaps he was aware that it was not from unwillingneſs to labour that ſeveral ſets of his workmen had loſt parts of the day; but merely *becauſe no man had hired them.* Perhaps he obſerved that, when they were ſent into his vineyard, they worked with greater diligence than their companions who had been hired ſooner. Perhaps he reflected, that the men, who were hired at the eleventh hour, would have to pay as much money for the maintainance during the paſt day of themſelves and their families as the others. At any rate, he was under no obligation to account to the murmurers for the reaſons of his liberality to the reſt. They did not complain that he was withholding from them any portion of the ſum which he had promiſed. They did not intimate that the ſum which they received from him was not an equitable recompenſe for their labour. Their eye was evil, becauſe he was good. Becauſe he was kind, they were grudging. Did that ſpirit point them out as worthy objects of bounty? And was not the maſter to be the judge where

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it became him to beſtow, and where to forbear? Was it not lawful for him to do what he would with his own?'

The principal cauſes from which Diſcontent proceeds are ſelfiſhneſs, envy, and pride.

Selfiſhneſs renders a man ſo anxious reſpecting his perſonal comforts and intereſts, that the ſight of an object which he ſuppoſes likely to contribute to either, or even the recollection of its exiſtence, will ſuffice to render him uneaſy and reſtleſs. His mind becomes buſied in projects for obtaining it, or in repinings that it is beyond his reach He is cloudy, ſullen, peeviſh, in the want of it: and in the poſſeſſion of it ſpeedily grows as diſcontented as before, in conſequence of diſcovering that he now wiſhes for ſome other acquiſition.

The envious man is diſcontented when he views the happineſs of another. The ſelfiſh man ſees with diſquiet any good in the poſſeſſion of his neighbour, becauſe he deſires to poſſeſs it himſelf. The envious man is diſquieted ſimply becauſe his neighbour enjoys the gratification of poſſeſſing it. For the object conſidered in itſelf, perhaps he has no inclination. Perhaps he is conſcious that it would be a trouble and a burthen to him.

Perhaps he is convinced that to himſelf it is unattainable. Yet he is wretched without it. It is not that he covets it for himſelf: he pines for it that his neighbour may have it not.

The proud man is indignant that others, whom he deſpiſes, ſhould poſſeſs an advantage of which he deems them unworthy: and doubly indignant, that he is not himſelf the poſſeſſor. If he obtains it, he is ſtill diſcontented that others may enjoy it likewiſe.

Diſcontent, viewed as an offence againſt God, involves folly, ingratitude, and preſumption.

It charges the wiſdom of God with folly. It complains of His appointments. It implies that He has not diſtributed his gifts to the greateſt advantage: that we could have choſen better for ourſelves than he has choſen for us. Now when Job was ſuffering, not under an imaginary trouble from the deſire of ſome object which he had never poſſeſſed, but under the loſs of all his earthly wealth and of all his children; *in all this* tribulation, *he ſinned not, nor charged God. fooliſhly* (*a*). Contraſted with this example, how grievous is the folly of Diſcontent!

(*a*) Job i. 22.

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Diſcontent is baſe ingratitude to our Heavenly Benefactor. Becauſe He withholds ſome one particular gift on which we have fixed our inclinations, we refuſe to render the tribute of cheerful thanks for the benefits which He has beſtowed. He has crowned us with numberleſs bleſſings. He ſuſtains and protects us by night and by day. He has mercy upon us notwithſtanding our continual tranſgreſſions. He has given His own Son to die for our iniquities. He ſets before us a kingdom of everlaſting glory. Yet becauſe there is one object which he withholds or reſumes, and withholds or reſumes becauſe he loves us; we are diſſatisfied with his dealings, and ſlight his immeaſurable goodneſs! When Job had to ſuſtain, in addition to the ſudden loſs of wealth and children, the ſevereſt bodily afflictions: was his language that of a diſcontented ſpirit? *What! ſhall we receive good at the hand of God, and ſhall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job ſin with his lips* (*b*).

Diſcontent is preſumption againſt the Lord of the whole earth. It forgets that we are His ſervants. It aſſumes his prerogative, and aſpires to regulate after its own will the courſe of His providence, to diſpoſe according

(*b*) Job, ii. 10.

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to its own pleaſure of the works of His hand, and of the offices in His houſehold. Clothe its thoughts with words, and it ſays to the moſt High; "I wiſh to be in ſuch a ſtation: why "doſt Thou not place me there? I wiſh for "ſuch a poſſeſſion: why doſt Thou not give "it to me? I diſlike ſuch an office in Thy fa-"mily; why haſt thou fixed me in it? I am "offended at ſuch an event: why haſt Thou "allowed it to come upon me?" Shall an earthly maſter chooſe his own ſervants for the different poſts in his houſe: and do you deny the ſame power to God? Shall an earthly maſter judge what is the ſituation in which this man may ſerve him the beſt, and what employment is fitteſt for another: and would you interfere with God in a ſimilar exerciſe of His rights? Shall an earthly proprietor diſpenſe his bounty according to his diſcretion: and do you call to account the Proprietor of all things for the manner in which He diſtributes His bleſſings? Shall the owner of a vineyard be juſtified in granting to the labourers hired at the eleventh hour wages equal to the ſum which he had promiſed to the workmen, who had borne the burthen and heat of the day: and ſhall not the Lord of all do what He will with his own? When Job, ſtung by the groundleſs

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accuſations of his friends, was hurried into the raſh and hopeleſs attempt of juſtifying himſelf before God; then was he enſnared, and we need not to wonder that he was left to be enſnared, into the language of Diſcontent. But *the Lord anſwered Job, and ſaid; Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty inſtruct Him? He that reproveth God, let him anſwer it.* Job felt conviction inſtantly. *Then Job anſwered the Lord, and ſaid; Behold, I am vile: what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I ſpoken; but I will not anſwer: yea twice, but I will proceed no farther* (*c*).

Obſerve the powerful influence of Diſcontent on Morality.

A tree may exhauſt itſelf by the abundance of its produce: but evil tempers are ſtrengthened in proportion to the quantity of fruit which they bear. Hence, when one evil temper becomes the root of a ſecond, the growth of the latter invigorates the former. When ſelfiſhneſs is the origin of Diſcontent, to cheriſh diſcontent is to encreaſe ſelfiſhneſs. It is to encourage the covetous deſires over which ſelfiſhneſs broods; the rapacious efforts, the deceitful machinations, by which it purſues the attainment of its object. When

(*c*) Job, xl. 1—5.

Diſcontent

to … …y, to harbour it
an… … to blacken the ma-
th… …rt; to envenom the
H… …ve. When Diſcon-
“ …ue, to indulge it is to
“ … to ſtimulate contempt,
‘ … to aggravate domineering
… to nurture every thought
… …rs, every deed which it
… …ition to the law of Chriſtian
… can the diſcontented man
…r as himſelf?
… *God* will *love his brother*
…e two great commandments are
… in hand. He who loveth
… not love his brother. So it was
… repreſented in the parable. Of
… who *murmured againſt the good*
… *houſe*, under which title the ſu-
… of all is emblematically deſcrib-
… at the ſame time ſtated, that their
… towards their aſſociates. Look
… own hearts, and examine whether
… be not ſimilar with you, in any in-
… of diſcontent.

…ider farther, how deeply the ſpirit of
…ent encroaches on the moral obſerv-
… of relative duties. If governors are diſ-

(*d*) 1 John, iv. 21.

contented with their ſubjects; how ſtrong is the temptation to fail in the offices of diſintereſted and affectionate ſuperintendence? If ſubjects are diſcontented with their governors; how languid is loyalty, how cold is obedience! In private life, when diſcontent occupies the boſom, every object is viewed through the medium of irritation. Incidents in themſelves indifferent are miſinterpreted, and excite commotion: incidents actually unpleaſant raiſe a tempeſt. Hence the huſband becomes ſour and moroſe towards the wife; the wife captious and cold towards her huſband. Hence *fathers provoke their children to anger*, meeting their behaviour when umblameable with harſh and vexatious reprehenſion, ſo that they are *diſcouraged* (*e*). Hence maſters and miſtreſſes of families view with peeviſh diſſatisfaction the decent ability and attention of ſervants: and while they injure a uſeful domeſtic by a haſty and improvident diſmiſſal, deprive themſelves of his ſervices on account of imperfections no greater than muſt reaſonably be expected in his ſucceſſor. Hence alſo friends cool in their attachment: and they who have long been united in *the houſehold of faith* ſeem almoſt to forget the love of bro-

(*e*) Col. iii. 21.

therhood.

therhood. How immoral is a diſcontented mind!

Let me now ſuggeſt ſome conſiderations, which may be inſtrumental, under the grace of God, in ſtrengthening you againſt diſcontent.

Recollect, in the firſt place, that objects which you have heretofore been very anxious to obtain, have not realiſed, when you have procured them, the expectations which you had cheriſhed. Poſſibly, when firſt poſſeſſed, they may have afforded the ſatisfaction which you anticipated. But afterwards you found a large deficiency. If you ſhould become maſter of the object which you now deſire, you will experience the ſame reſult. Be leſs uneaſy then in the want of it.

In the next place; has it not repeatedly happened that when ſome other object on which you had ſet your heart has proved unattainable; you have learned by experience, not only that the poſſeſſion of it was of leſs importance to your welfare than you had ſuppoſed, but that you have been enabled to live in reaſonable comfort without it? Why ſhould not the caſe be the ſame with reſpect to the preſent object of your purſuit?

Again: has not Diſcontent been a poſitive

ſource

ſource of unhappineſs to you? Has it not deſtroyed your tranquillity, poiſoned your ſatisfactions, ſhut up many ſources of delight, rendered you your own tormentor? Calculate fairly and coolly, and tell yourſelf how often it has been that an object, the want of which filled you with diſcontent, has repaid you, when in your poſſeſſion, for the uneaſineſs which it occaſioned to you before.

Obſeve fourthly, how manifeſtly Diſcontent is a hindrance to the accompliſhment of its own wiſhes. Suppoſe that the object which you are ſolicitous to poſſeſs is in itſelf lawful, and that it is deſirable for you. How is it to be obtained? Are not your own exertions to be among the means by which it muſt be procured? Diſcontent miſguides, impedes, and baffles them. It clouds and unſettles the judgement; and urges you to raſh, uncertain, and unproductive efforts. Who is the man that will purſue his object with conſiſtent prudence, with perſevering energy? He who has exerciſed himſelf to *bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Chriſt*: who, neglecting no lawful means of ſucceeding in a lawful purpoſe, ſerenely commits the event to the good pleaſure of Infinite Wiſdom. This is the man whoſe exertions will be calculated to attain their end. This is the man

whoſe exertions God, whether by proſpering or by diſappointing them, will bleſs. His exertions, be the event of them what it may, together with his prayers whether granted or not, *ſhall turn into his own boſom.*

Reflect farther, on your own demerit. "Another man," you ſay, "enjoys more of "the favours of God than myſelf." Why ſhould not he enjoy more of them? Perhaps you will anſwer; "He deſerves them leſs than "I." Deſerves them leſs! How know you the meaſure of his deſerts? *Who art thou that judgeſt another*, and aſcribeſt the ſuperiority to thyſelf? Perhaps this man's tranſgreſſions are fewer than thine. Perhaps, if he ſinneth more than thou in ſome points, in others he is leſs enſlaved to wickedneſs than thou art. Perhaps when compared with thee by the Searcher of hearts, he is ſeen to have offended in the face of fainter light, againſt inferior inſtruction, under the contagion of worſe example. Be theſe things as they may, do you deſerve the favours which you grudge to your neighbour? Is that grudging ſpirit an indication of deſerving them? Whether your neighbour be more unworthy or leſs unworthy of them than yourſelf, do you preſume to ſay that in the ſight of God you deſerve them? Think of life and all its attend-

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ant mercies beſtowed upon you by His bountiful hand: think of the countleſs benefits which he has ſhowered down upon you, and ſtill continues to you: and anſwer whether, inſtead of murmuring for an additional bleſſing, it were not better to be employed in an humble confeſſion that you have juſtly incurred the forfeiture of all that you have received. Convicted by your own conſcience, and convicted, if you deal honeſtly with yourſelf, you muſt be, of having made a worthleſs and ungrateful return for the favours already conferred upon you from your birth to the preſent moment; you repine that you do not poſſeſs more! And what if more were granted? Would not your reſponſibility be encreaſed? Would not a proportionate return be demanded? *To whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall much be required.* Unable as you have proved yourſelf to offer to your Benefactor and Judge even the ſemblance of a ſuitable return; are you eager and impatient to ſwell with new articles an account, to which you ought now to look forward, even if you repoſe on the merits of the great Redeemer, with aweful anxiety; if on merits of your own, with deſpair? In computing your preſent advantages, reckon as one of them, that you do not poſſeſs the object, the want of

which renders you diſcontented. That God has not beſtowed it upon you furniſhes a preſumption, that it would not be an advantage to you. Your diſſatisfied temper reſpecting it furniſhes another preſumption. That acquiſition which you are diſcontented at not poſſeſſing you would probably employ amiſs, were it granted. Be thankful that you have it not.

In the next place; turn your eyes on the perſons who, apparently, are leſs favored at the hand of God than yourſelf. What is the poſſeſſion for which you are ſo ſolicitous? Is it an encreaſe of money? How many perſons are poorer than you; poorer in poſitive property, poorer in their ſtation than you are in yours! Is it ſome particular accommodation bearing cloſely on your comfort? How many perſons are unable to procure accommodations more important to them than your object is to you! Is it elevation in your line of life, or removal to a higher? How many, with opening proſpects in their youth far ſuperior to thoſe with which you began to climb the aſcent of manhood, are now beneath your level! Is it a deſirable ſettlement for a child? How many parents have beheld their hopes, when ſeemingly on the verge of accompliſhment, blighted for ever; or when thoſe hopes have been

been oſtenſibly fulfilled, terminating in a ſtill more painful diſappointment? Many alſo of theſe individuals, who, ſo far as human conjecture may pronounce, ſeverally are leſs favored than yourſelf, in the reſpective points which have been ſpecified, would probably be found, were their condition accurately compared with yours, under ſome other circumſtances of diſadvantage. Be not diſcontented, but thankful.

Farther; attend to the example of your Lord, and of thoſe who after his departure from the world trod the moſt carefully in his ſteps. When the Lord of glory had *not where to lay his head*; when in this reſpect placed for our ſakes by His Heavenly Father's will in a condition inferior not only to that of the poſſeſſor of the humbleſt cottage, but to that of the foxes which have holes, and the birds of the air which have neſts: did he repine at the diſpenſation? *Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God,* was under every circumſtance the language of his heart. When wearied in the cities by crowds which inceſſantly preſſed upon him to be healed of their diſeaſes and to hear his doctrine, ſo that he had not time even to eat bread; when precluded from repoſe in the deſerts to which he had retired by immediate interruptions from new multi-

tudes; when recompenſed for his incalculable mercies with diſregard, with contempt, with treachery, with perſecution, with death; where is the inſtance, in which a murmur of diſcontent broke from his lips? Look to his Apoſtles. How diligently did they follow the example which their maſter had ſet before them! He among them who had relinquiſhed the moſt and had ſuffered the moſt was enabled through the grace of his Lord truly to affirm; *I have learned, in whatſoever ſtate I am, therewith to be content* (*f*). Look to the early Chriſtians, who proved that they regarded themſelves as ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth: who, not only when they had *food and raiment*, were *therewith content*, not only were not diſſatisfied in the total abſence of worldly advantages, but *took joyfully*, took be it obſerved, with a rejoicing heart, the ſpoiling *of their goods, knowing* themſelves to *have in heaven a better and a more enduring ſubſtance* (*g*).

Liſten to one conſideration more. *All things work together for good to them that love God.* Where then is the place for diſcontent? If you love not God, on what pretence can you deſire gifts and favors from him? If you love Him, all things work together

(*f*) Philip. iv. 11. (*g*) Hebr. x. 34.

for

your good. The abſence of the object the poſſeſſion of which you are anxious; failure of your efforts to acquire it; the diſappointment of your hopes, are work- together for your good. What is there ner for you to deſire?

et us all, my brethren, lay to heart the ns on which we have meditated; and fer- ly ſeek from the Giver of all good the ing of a contented ſpirit. The ſinfulneſs Diſcontent is pointedly marked in the hiſ- of the children of Iſrael. *When the peo- omplained*, during their abode in the wil- neſs, *it diſpleaſed the Lord; and the Lord d it, and His anger was kindled:* and *the f the Lord burnt among them, and conſumed that were in the uttermoſt parts of the* (*b*). Afterwards they became diſcon- ed with the manna, and murmured for to eat. *Then Moſes heard the people weep ughout their families, every man in the door s tent: and the anger of the Lord was kindled ly.* His power which had been queſtion- he diſplayed by bringing an innumerable pany of quails round the camp. But *the fleſh was yet between their teeth, ere s chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kin- gainſt the people; and the Lord ſmote the*

(*b*) Numbers, xi. 1.

people with a very great plague (*i*). Hear St. Paul in his application of the example of the Iſraelites to ourſelves: *Neither murmur ye, as ſome of them alſo murmured; and were deſtroyed of the deſtroyer* (*k*). Hear St. Jude characteriſing the ſinners of the laſt days as *ſpeaking hard ſpeeches againſt God*, as *murmurers and complainers, walking after their own luſts* (*l*). Let us beware of being found in the number. Let us *have faith in God*; and quietly commit ourſelves in all things unto Him. *Let us be content with ſuch things as we have: for He hath ſaid, I will never leave thee nor forſake thee* (*m*).

(*i*) Numbers, xi. 10—33. (*k*) 1 Cor. x. 10.
(*l*) Jude, 16. (*m*) Hebr. xiii. 5.

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SERMON XII.

On Worldly Anxiety.

PHILIP. iv. 6, 7.

Be careful for Nothing: but in every Thing by Prayer and Supplication with Thankſgiving, let your Requeſts be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which paſſeth all Underſtanding, ſhall keep your Hearts and Minds through Chriſt Jeſus.

IN this paſſage the Apoſtle warns us againſt a frame of mind, which, whether its intrinſic nature or its effect as to morality be regarded, will prove itſelf intimately allied to a ſpirit of Diſcontent.

The preceding verſe cloſes with a very weighty admonition; *The Lord is at hand.* As though St. Paul had ſaid; "The preſent "life is not only ſo uncertain, but is like-"wiſe ſo ſhort, that death, which fixes your "ſtate for Judgement, may well be always "contemplated by every one, whether old or

" young, as near." To the various inſtructions which he had before been delivering this conſideration would give additional force. Had he thus exhorted the ſervants of Chriſt: *Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I ſay, Rejoice?* The more warmly would they rejoice in the promiſes of the goſpel, when they reflected that it could be but a ſhort time which ſhould paſs before they ſhould depart and be in poſſeſſion of their inheritance with their Lord. Had he thus addreſſed them; *Let your moderation be known unto all men?* The more eaſily would they reſtrain themſelves through the grace of God from ſetting their affections on things on earth, when they bore in mind that the period could not be long before they ſhould be ſeparated from earthly things for ever. The ſame conſideration would contribute to teach and to enable them to obey the ſucceeding command; *Be careful for nothing.* On another occaſion we find the apoſtle employing the ſame general argument in a manner ſubſtantially ſimilar. When he counſels the Corinthians to be cautious as to the needleſs aggravation of their difficulties in their Chriſtian courſe, and the accumulation of freſh anxieties reſpecting temporal concerns, by entering into the married ſtate during thoſe days of diſtreſs

diſtreſs and perſecution; it is thus that he impreſſes the advice. *This I ſay, brethren; the time is ſhort. It remaineth that they that weep be as though they wept not: and they that rejoice*, (not they that rejoice *in the Lord*, but they that rejoice in the preſent accompliſhment of their worldly wiſhes) *as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they poſſeſſed not; and they that uſe this world, as not abuſing it: for the faſhion of this world paſſeth away. But I would have you without careful-neſs* (*a*).

We perceive then how powerful is the motive with which the apoſtle introduces to the Philippians the directions upon which we are now to meditate: *Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and ſupplication with thankſgiving let your requeſts be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep your hearts and minds through Chriſt Jeſus.* They are directions replete with the ſoundeſt advice and the moſt encouraging conſolation. May the divine grace guide us all to apply them aright to our own inſtruction and comfort!

I. What is the diſpoſition of mind, againſt which Saint Paul admoniſhes us? Careful-neſs; that is to ſay, harraſſing anxiety, whe-

(*a*) 1 Cor. vii. 29—32.

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ther under preſent troubles, or under the apprehenſion of future trials. To ſuch anxiety we are all prone. The cauſes which naturally incline us to it are many. One of them is, the conſciouſneſs of our own helpleſsneſs. We diſcover, that we are open on every ſide, within and without, to tribulations, loſſes, perils, againſt which we are unable to guard. Their actual amount, in itſelf very great, we in ſome inſtances magnify; and in more we magnify the probability of experiencing them, or at leaſt of experiencing them ſpeedily. Thus we are eaſily drawn into overwhelming ſolicitude. Another cauſe is the acknowledged neceſſity and duty of perſonal exertion for the purpoſe of avoiding the evils which we dread, and obtaining the good which we deſire. This very habit of exertion has in many caſes a tendency to encreaſe and rivet the anxiety, from which it in part originates. Another cauſe is an undue value for earthly objects. Where our treaſure is, there alſo will be our heart. And in proportion to the gratification which we promiſe to ourſelves from any poſſeſſion will be our anxiety to acquire and to retain it. Another cauſe, not, like the laſt, blameable in its own nature, but on the contrary amiable in itſelf and laudable, is affection

affection for others. For thoſe who are juſtly dear to us we feel, and we ought to feel, as for ourſelves. Often we feel more for them than we ſhould feel for ourſelves. For their concerns we are not leſs anxious, frequently we are much more anxious, than for our own. Nay, it not ſeldom happens that we indulge our minds permanently and with open eyes in a ſtate of unwarrantable carefulneſs reſpecting the intereſts of perſons whom we love, which an averſion even to the appearance of ſelfiſhneſs would have prompted us to check with regard to ſubjects affecting ourſelves alone. Another cauſe is the want of a ſufficiently ſtrong and lively faith in God. Looking too little to Him, we are deſervedly allowed to harraſs ourſelves with our own ſchemes, to become a prey to our own imaginations. Theſe cauſes of carefulneſs are general. They exerciſe an influence more or leſs active over every perſon. In ſome perſons their effect is encreaſed by particular cauſes; as by weakneſs of health, by unuſual calamities, or by other circumſtances which have weighed down the ſpirits, and diſpoſed the mind to more than ordinary fearfulneſs and ſuſpicion.

The unſuitableneſs of this anxious temper to a Chriſtian may be ſhewn by various ar-

arguments. One argument adequate of itſelf to prove that unſuitableneſs, the conſideration, namely, that *the Lord is at hand*, has already been noticed. Objects, with which we are ſpeedily to part, cannot reaſonably call forth overpowering ſolicitude. In the next place; why do not we reflect on our ignorance? *For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life, which he ſpendeth as a ſhadow* (*b*)? The objects which we ſtrenuouſly deſire might prove, if attained, injurious to our preſent comfort, dangerous to our final welfare. The events which we dread and are labouring to ſhun may be bleſſings in diſguiſe: bleſſings to us both as to this world and as to the next. Then how little can the moſt eager carefulneſs accompliſh! This is an argument employed by our Lord himſelf. *Which of you with taking thought can add to his ſtature one cubit? If then ye be not able to do that thing which is leaſt, why take ye thought for the reſt* (*c*). Recollect alſo the diſabling effect of carefulneſs upon the mind. It clouds the underſtanding; perplexes the judgement; produces imprudence, raſhneſs, or fluctuating and dilatory proceedings: and

(*b*) Eccles. vi. 12. (*c*) Luke, xii. 25, 26.

frequently

frequently diſqualifies us for that very exertion which it recommends, and without which the attainment of our wiſhes is impoſſible. It encreaſes, likewiſe, in proportion as it is indulged, the immoderate value, which we already aſſign to the earthly objects on which our anxiety is fixed. It augments the want of confidence in God and of dependence on His love, and every other unchriſtian feeling which has contributed to load us with ſolicitude.

The influence of Carefulneſs on morality is energetic and pernicious. Carefulneſs has but a ſtep to take ere it becomes diſcontent. That ſtep taken, it is a ſource of all thoſe violations of the law of love to our neighbour, which diſcontent has already enumerated among her fruits. When carefulneſs ſtops ſhort, if ever it wholly ſtops ſhort, of diſcontent; ſtill it ſets its affections on things on earth: ſtill it retains its overweening eſtimate of their importance: ſtill it tempts to the uſe of unwarrantable means for the purpoſe of ſecuring poſſeſſion of its object: ſtill it manifeſts diſproportionate alarm under the apprehenſion of impending troubles, and ſhews itſelf not ſufficiently ſcrupulous as to the methods employed to avert them: ſtill it leads us practically to regard

regard the intereſt and the comfort of our neighbour as leſs valuable than our own, or than the advantage and eaſe of the perſons for whom we are careful. It ſours the mind; renders the temper irritable and uncertain; corrodes the ſatisfactions, and undermines the quiet, of domeſtic life. It deadens the ſympathy of others, by continually calling it into exerciſe on ſome ſmall occaſion: and thus prediſpoſes and tempts them to indifference. Diſguſting them by treating every trifle as a concern of moment, it teaches them to treat momentous things as trifles.

" But are there not any worldly objects," you aſk, " concerning which anxiety that " may be called harraſſing may lawfully be " indulged?" Hear the anſwer of St. Paul: *Be careful for nothing.* There is no worldly object concerning which it is allowable to indulge a degree of ſolicitude incompatible with willing ſubmiſſion to the appointment of God, with any branch of the Chriſtian ſpirit, with cheerful activity in Chriſtian duty. Does the reply of the Apoſtle ſtand in need of confirmation? Hear it confirmed by our Saviour. *Take no thought for the morrow: the morrow ſhall take thought for the things of itſelf. I ſay unto you, take no thought for*

for your life, what ye ſhall eat or what ye ſhall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye ſhall put on (*d*). In this paſſage there are two particulars, to which I would invite your attention. Firſt: In the original language of the New Teſtament, the word which our Saviour uſes to expreſs *taking thought*, is the very word which St. Paul employs to ſignify *being careful* (*e*). In the next place, our Lord ſhews that the command not to take thought, not to be careful, admits not of any exception, by applying the injunction to particulars which are abſolutely neceſſary to our exiſtence. Take no thought *what ye ſhall eat; or what ye ſhall drink; or what ye ſhall put on.* That it was not the intention of Chriſt to forbid anxiety merely as to the kind and the quality of food and raiment, is manifeſt from the reaſons which he aſſigns againſt carefulneſs. Why are we not to take thought what we ſhall eat, or what we ſhall drink? Becauſe God feedeth the fowls of the air, which neither ſow, nor reap, nor gather into barns. Why are we not to take thought what we ſhall put on? Becauſe God arrays the lilies of the field, which neither toil nor ſpin, with glory ſuperior to all the magnificence with which

(*d*) Matth. vi. 25—34. Luke, xii. 22, &c.
(*e*) Μεριμναω.

Solomon

Solomon was inveſted. If then we are poſitively forbidden to harbour diſtreſſing anxiety even reſpecting common nouriſhment and clothing, articles without the conſtant ſupply of which life cannot be ſuſtained: aſſuredly there is no worldly object concerning which ſuch anxiety is permitted. *Be careful for nothing.*

II. WHAT courſe are we then to take, when troubles preſs upon us, or hang over us? *In every thing*, replies the Apoſtle, *by prayer and ſupplication with thankſgiving let your requeſts be made known unto God.*

When our Saviour forbids harraſſing cares even concerning food and clothing, and conſequently reſpecting any other terreſtrial object; He gives us ample encouragement to lay aſide our anxieties, by reminding us of the gracious love with which our heavenly Father is pleaſed to look upon us. *God feedeth the ravens. How much more are ye better*, how much more precious are ye in his ſight, *than the fowls! If God ſo clothe the graſs, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is caſt into the oven: how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith! Be not ye of doubtful mind. Your Father knoweth that ye have need of theſe things.* In the text

he exhorts us, by the mouth of this Apoſtle, to communicate on every occaſion our wiſhes to God, as to a Father of whoſe tender and unvarying love we are aſſured. Obſerve the extenſiveneſs of the encouragement. *In every thing.* It is not ſaid; "Under cer- "tain kinds of trial you are at liberty to "apply unto God for relief: but there are "ſome troubles, under which you are not "authorized to lay your deſires before "Him." It is not ſaid; "When calamity "is actually come upon you, then may you "ſeek unto the Lord Omnipotent for relief: "but if you are merely apprehenſive that it "will befal you, forbear to ſolicit it before- "hand." It is not ſaid; "If you are an "eminent Chriſtian, you are warranted to "pray for deliverance from the tribulation "which you experience or fear: but if you "are conſcious of much remaining ſin, "venture not to addreſs yourſelf to God." The encouragement comprehends all trials, all times, all perſons. Apply to God *in every thing.* The command to apply to Him is no leſs wide, and wider it could not be, than the prohibition againſt carefulneſs. Be careful *for nothing.* *In every thing* let your requeſts be made known unto God. Whatever then be the evil from which we

gladly would be protected, whatever be the good with which we are desirous to be favored: we are authorized and exhorted, now and at all seasons, to request our Heavenly Father through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant the wish of our heart. Observe farther, the manner in which we are to make our requests known unto Him: *by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. By prayer.* We are to address ourselves to Him as a God who heareth prayer, and is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think; and as a Father reconciled to us through the blood of his beloved Son, and ready to bestow upon us freely, as the adopted brethren of the Lord Jesus, every blessing of the life which now is and of that which is to come. *By prayer and supplication.* Mark the force of this addition. We are authorized and exhorted not merely to address ourselves to God once, or sparingly, in prayer for the particular blessing which we request: but to plead for it before Him with supplication; with earnest, repeated, and continued entreaty. Our pleading must be presented with submission to His good pleasure; with a decided preference that not our will, but His should be done. But, under

that

that limitation, our entreaty that our petition may be granted, may lawfully be earneſt, repeated, continued. And to be inſtant and fervent and perſevering in prayer, are among the means declared in the Scriptures to be conducive to its ſucceſs. To forward the ſucceſs of our prayer and ſupplication we muſt add *thanſgiving*. A grateful acknowledgement of mercies already received is ſurely a becoming accompaniment of a requeſt for any additional bleſſing. But there ſeems alſo to be a ſpecial reaſon, which might lead St. Paul particularly to name thankſgiving in this paſſage. Thankſgiving is among the cleareſt evidences that we are free from carefulneſs, from the frame of mind which our Lord has been forbidding, and in the place of which he enjoins that we make our requeſts known unto God. It is not difficult for a perſon to be full of care at the very time when he prays and ſupplicates. Nay, his carefulneſs may be among the motives, which ſend him to prayer and ſupplication. But it is ſcarcely poſſible for him to be at the ſame time careful and thankful. How can the ſerenity and joy and humble faith, which belong to a thankful heart, exiſt together with a ſpirit of care?

The habit of fervent and perſevering and grateful prayer has a direct tendency to animate and elevate morality. Without it morality cannot ſubſiſt. It is thus that we are to obtain the grace, which univerſally enables men *to will and to do*. It is thus that we are to obtain the ſpecial ſtrength, requiſite on individual occaſions to uphold us againſt temptations to immoral conduct. The ſtate of mind, too, which is ſuited to prayer, is wholly adverſe to every immoral deſire. By prayer that ſtate of mind is invigorated and confirmed. What man, who has devoutly prayed for pardon, can riſe from his knees in an unforgiving temper? How can he, who has recently ſupplicated for bleſſings, be unkind? How can he, whoſe heart has been expanding itſelf in thankſgiving, go forth to a deed of ingratitude?

III. What is the benefit promiſed to us, if we obey the command to be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and ſupplication with thankſgiving, make our requeſts known unto God? *The peace of God*, anſwers the Apoſtle, *which paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep your hearts and minds through Chriſt Jeſus.*

Peace is the benefit promiſed; and that peace

peace, the peace of God: the peace which God is ever ready to beſtow, and which He alone can impart. Of this promiſed peace it is declared, that it *paſſeth all underſtanding*. It is an unſpeakable tranquillity, a peculiar ſerenity, which ſurpaſſes all previous imagination; and can be fully comprehended by thoſe only, to whom it is known by experience. It is one of thoſe gifts of God which, until it has been in ſome meaſure poſſeſſed, eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. It is a compoſure ſhed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghoſt. It conſiſts in a firm conviction that God is a God of love, a God of love to each of us individually: that all things are in His hands, and come to paſs only by His appointment or permiſſion: that He knows all our neceſſities: that His eye watches over us by night and by day: that in Him we live and move, and have our being: that He diſcerns at every moment what is beſt for us: that no good thing will He withhold from His ſervants: that all things ſhall work together for good in the end to them that love Him. Well may this confidence *keep the heart and mind* of the true penitent in undiſturbed repoſe! It raiſes them from things temporal

to things eternal; from earth to heaven; from man to God. It diſperſes alarm, whether with reſpect to preſent or to future events, by revealing the Lord of the univerſe, infinite in power, in foreknowledge, in wiſdom, in truth, in goodneſs, in mercy and loving kindneſs, as ſtanding by the ſide of His ſervants to protect, to guide, to uphold them, to render the whole courſe of His Providence a ſucceſſion, in their own caſe, of bleſſings. Surely this peace is *the peace of God.* And it is *through Chriſt Jeſus.* It is one of the fruits of His ſufferings, of His continued interceſſion for us. It is diſpenſed through Him as head over all things to His church. It is connected with the conſciouſneſs of that redeeming love, by which he has paid the penalty of tranſgreſſion and deſtroyed the dominion of ſin. It is a fore-taſte of that eternal peace in which, when the trials of earth are paſſed away, His glorified ſervants ſhall reign with Him in heaven.

Is not this peace of God, diffuſed over the the ſoul, moſt favourable to morality; to univerſal equity, kindneſs, purity, to every thought and deed of holy obedience? It is the temper of heaven, full of love to God and to man: ſoothing all ſorrows, calming all paſſions;

paſſions; withdrawing the heart from earth; reducing earthly objects to their real level of inſignificance; extinguiſhing carefulneſs and irritation reſpecting them; and thus prompting us at once and ſetting us at liberty to love our neighbour as ourſelves.

Having endeavoured to explain the ſubſtance of the inſtruction conveyed in the paſſage before us; let me briefly apply it to three deſcriptions of perſons.

Firſt; I would addreſs thoſe who are eagerly toiling in the purſuit of things of the earth. You greatly overvalue the object which you ſeek. Perhaps, if you ſhould obtain it, you may live to lament that it ever ſhould have come into your poſſeſſion. But ſuppoſing it to be really deſirable for you; ſtill, if you gain it, your expectations will not be anſwered. It will be found more imperfect, when near at hand, than it appears at a diſtance. It will alſo bring troubles of its own. But, however valuable it may be, you are not purſuing it in the method moſt likely to be ſucceſsful. *Except the Lord build the houſe, their labour is but loſt that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is but loſt labour that ye haſte to riſe up early, and ſo late take reſt, and eat the bread of careful-*

carefulneſs (*f*). Succeſs is from above. Would you obtain it? *Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and ſupplication with thankſgiving let your requeſts be made known unto God. Commit thy way unto the Lord*; and if it be for thy good, *He will bring it to paſs. Seek firſt the kingdom of God and His righteouſneſs; and all other* needful *things ſhall be added unto thee.*

Secondly: There are perſons of a ſanguine temper, who ſee every thing as in ſunſhine; and, in whatever undertaking they are occupied, promiſe to themſelves a general current of ſucceſs. Such men may be regarded by others, nay they may regard themſelves, as obeying the command, *Be careful for nothing.* But their freedom from care ariſes not from humble truſt in God. It ſprings from a diſpoſition bordering, or more than bordering, on preſumption. Their confidence reſts not on a right foundation. It is placed mainly on themſelves. Or it relies on ſome other arm of fleſh. Or it is grounded on a paſt courſe of proſperous events; which they term conſtant good fortune, and conſider as almoſt certain to continue to attend them. It is not a meek and

(*f*) Pſalm cxxvii. 1, 2.

filial

filial dependence on the unmerited love of a Heavenly Father. Are they wont *in every thing by prayer and ſupplication with thankſgiving to make their requeſts known unto God?* Let them thus ſeek for ſucceſs, if they would have a ſcriptural hope of obtaining it, and of finding it a bleſſing.

Thirdly: Let ſome few ſeaſonable words be ſpoken to the dejected; to thoſe who, being depreſſed by a conviction of ſinfulneſs, ſcarcely dare to believe themſelves authorized to caſt all their cares upon God, and to hope for that peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding. Be not ſurprized, ye who are thus bowed down and diſmayed, be not ſurprized to hear, be not afraid to hear with joy, that you are the very perſons whom your God particularly encourages to caſt your cares upon Him; you are the very perſons to whom He ſpecially promiſes His peace. Examine the Scriptures; and you will perceive that the promiſes and conſolations of the goſpel are offered and enſured to thoſe perſons in particular, who feel their need of them the moſt. Mark your Saviour's expreſſions: Bleſſed are they that *mourn*: for *they* ſhall be *comforted*. Come unto Me, all ye *that labour and are heavy laden*,

laden, and I will give you reſt (*g*). Have faith in God. *Thou wilt keep him*, O Lord, *in perfect peace; whoſe mind is ſtayed on Thee, becauſe he truſteth in Thee. Truſt in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlaſting ſtrength. Caſt all your care upon Him: for He careth for you* (*h*). He careth for you the more, becauſe you feel your need of His care. Mark how St. Paul was ſupported through all his manifold trials, becauſe he was careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and ſupplication with thankſgiving made his requeſts known unto God. In whatever ſtate he was placed, he was enabled therewith to be content. In tribulation he could always rejoice. Though *troubled on every ſide*, he was not diſtreſſed. Under every circumſtance he found the grace of Chriſt ſufficient for him. He could do all things through Chriſt, who ſtrengthened him. The peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding, kept his heart and mind through Chriſt Jeſus. Be animated and cheered, for well you may, by the encouraging inſtruction ſpecially addreſſed

(*g*) Matth. v. 4. xi. 28.
(*h*) Iſaiah, xxvi. 3, 4. 1 Pet. v. 7.

dreſſed to you by the Apoſtle in the text; and by the comfort which his own example, in conſequence of being correſpondent to that inſtruction, holds out to you. *Thoſe things which you have both learned and received and heard and ſeen in him, do: and the God of peace ſhall be with you* (*i*).

To conclude: let the miniſter of the goſpel, in declaring the ſcriptural promiſes of peace, let the private Chriſtian in applying theſe promiſes to himſelf, beware of ſpeaking *peace where there is no peace. There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked* (*k*). The peace of God the wicked cannot poſſeſs. And without that peace, all other peace is deluſion. It is the calm which forebodes a tempeſt; the lethargy which is the forerunner of death. If you are not a real ſervant of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, you are the enemy of your neighbour: you are your country's enemy, and your own. You are aggrieving your neighbour by evil conduct: you are corrupting him by unchriſtian example. You are adding by your unrighteouſneſs to your country's danger: you are heaping condemnation upon yourſelf. A kingdom may be ſpared from ſubverſion: but an unrepenting ſinner ſhall not eſcape judgement. Your

(*i*) Philipp. iv. 9. (*k*) Ezek. xiii. 10—16. Iſ. lvii. 21.

country

country may be permitted to ſtand in the earthly conflict: but you ſhall periſh in the great day of the Lord. Do you love your neighbour? Seek for grace to be righteous. Do you love your own ſoul? Seek for grace to be righteous. Do you love your Redeemer? Seek for grace to be righteous. Lay the foundation of religion in a deep conviction of the natural corruption of the heart and of the entire change which muſt be wrought by the power of the Holy Ghoſt in the heart of every man, before he can *ſee the kingdom of God* (*l*). Proceed through unfeigned ſelf-abaſement and repentance to living faith in the only Saviour. Prove your faith to be the faith which juſtifies, by manifeſting it to be the faith which *worketh by love*. Acting on Chriſtian principles, *to the Lord and not unto men*, demonſtrate their ſuperiority by the practical holineſs which they produce. Glorify the maſter whom you ſerve by adorning His goſpel in all things, and by leading others to give him glory. Then ſhall *the peace of God through Chriſt Jeſus* reſt upon you throughout eternity.

(*l*) John, iii. 3.

SER-

SERMON XIII.

On Christian Obedience to Civil Rulers.

MATTH. xxii. 21.

Then ſaith He unto them; Render therefore unto Cæſar the things which are Cæſar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

MANY years before our Saviour commenced his public miniſtry, the Romans had rendered themſelves maſters of the land of Iſrael. They eſtabliſhed a governor in Jeruſalem: and required the Jewiſh nation to pay tribute to Cæſar. To the people in general this demand was extremely odious: and nothing but ſuperior force awed them into compliance. The tribute was a mark of national ſubjection; a tax paid to a victorious adverſary. On that account it was highly offenſive to the Jews. But there was another circumſtance which poſſeſſed great weight. A religious ſcruple came in aid of the public feeling.

feeling. A paſſage in the book of Deuteronomy (*a*) forbade the Iſraelites to appoint a ſtranger to be King over them. This prohibition indeed related only to their voluntary choice of a ſovereign. It never was intended to be applied to the caſe of their being conquered by enemies. But as Cæſar was a foreigner, and alſo an idolater; many perſons appear ſeriouſly to have apprehended that to pay tribute to him would be to diſobey that precept of the law, and to violate their allegiance to God. And this ſentiment accorded ſo well with the proud and refractory ſpirit of the Jews, that it obtained extenſive influence among them: and was patroniſed by the Phariſees, who affected extraordinary zeal for the law. Among thoſe who contended for the lawfulneſs of paying tribute to Cæſar, the Herodians were diſtinguiſhed. Theſe were men who had attached themſelves to the intereſts of Herod, the King of Galilee. Herod was countenanced and protected by the Romans. Hence his adherents, who were an unprincipled ſet of partiſans, embraced that ſide of the queſtion which was the moſt acceptable to the Romans, and the moſt conducive to the authority of their Emperor.

(*a*) Deut. xvii. 14, 15.

Of this divided ſtate of public opinion the chief prieſts and the ſcribes, the bitter enemies of Chriſt, reſolved to take advantage in order to compaſs his deſtruction. His death they had long been plotting. But the pointed energy, with which he had recently expoſed their iniquities, had raiſed their indignation and malice to the higheſt degree: inſomuch that they would inſtantly have laid hands upon him, had they not been afraid that the common people, by whom he was at this time reſpected and revered, would have riſen in his defence and reſcued him. Now, however, *having taken counſel how they might entangle him in his talk*, they conceived themſelves to have deviſed a plan which could not fail of ſecuring their object. They ſent forth a choſen number of the Phariſees and of the Herodians, ſpies in reality and tempters, but *feigning themſelves juſt men*; aſſuming an outward ſhew of ſanctity, and pretending to be diſtreſſed by religious doubts and ſcruples of conſcience, to aſk his deciſion upon the queſtion of tribute. The anſwer of our Lord, whatever it ſhould be, his enemies concluded muſt produce his ruin. If he ſhould reply that tribute ought to be paid to Cæſar; they were prepared inſtantly to repreſent him as a deſpiſer of the law of Moſes,

a be-

a betrayer of the liberties of his country, a friend and confederate of its enemies: as one who could not be the promiſed Meſſiah, that Redeemer who was to come, as was generally believed, for the ſpecial purpoſe of delivering the nation from every foreign yoke. His credit with the people would thus be annihilated: interference in his favor would not need to be apprehended from them: he might ſafely be ſeized and deſtroyed. If he ſhould anſwer that tribute ought not to be rendered; then might he be delivered at once as a ſower of ſedition and a rebel into the hands of the Roman governor, who aſſuredly would put him to death. Theſe wicked men ſeem to have expected that the earneſtneſs which Chriſt always manifeſted for the glory of God, and the deſire which they imagined that he would feel to conciliate the people, would lead him to declare againſt the payment of tribute. And they the rather wiſhed for this anſwer, as it would not only ſecure his deſtruction by enabling them *to take hold of his words, that ſo they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor* (*b*); but would exempt them from the odium and the difficulties, which might attend any direct violence on their part againſt him. But

(*b*) Luke, xx. 20.

the ſnare was ſo artfully framed, that, whatever might be his reply, they concluded that it would be impoſſible for him to eſcape, and were exulting beforehand in the proſpect of certain ſucceſs. Their ſpies now approached him; and addreſſed him with hypocritical compliments. *Maſter! we know that thou art true, and teacheſt the way of God in truth; neither careſt thou for any man, for thou regardeſt not the perſon of men.* We are ſatisfied that thou wilt return to us without reſerve or heſitation a juſt anſwer to our enquiries, regardleſs of giving offence to Cæſar or to any other mortal: for thou payeſt not court to man, nor feareſt man, but ſeekeſt only to announce and to fulfil the good pleaſure of God. After this inſidious introduction they propoſed their queſtion: *What thinkeſt thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæſar, or not?* Blind and infatuated men! Ye diſcern not that ye are endeavouring to impoſe upon Him, from whom no *ſecrets are hid! He perceived their wickedneſs; and ſaid unto them, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money.* Why, under the pretext of ſtating an enquiry for conſcience' ſake, are you ſcheming in ſubtlety and malice to deſtroy me? Bring me a piece of your current coin. They produced a ſmall piece of ſilver. *Whoſe is this*

image and ſuperſcription? Whoſe head is this which is ſtamped upon the money? Whoſe name and titles are recorded in the inſcription which it bears? They replied, *Cæſar's.* This confeſſion, which it was not practicable to avoid, in a moment overthrew their plans. In thoſe days, as in the preſent, to impreſs the likeneſs and the name and the titles of a perſon upon the national coin was an open acknowledgement that the individual was the lawful ſovereign of the nation. *Render therefore*, proceeded our Lord, in terms which, while they conveyed a leſſon of general inſtruction, equally reproved the refractory ſpirit of the Phariſees, who were unwilling to obey the civil power under which they were placed, and the time-ſerving conduct of the Herodians, who acquieſced in many heathen practices with a view of gratifying the Romans: *Render therefore unto Cæſar the things which are Cæſar's; and unto God the things which are God's.* Obey your recogniſed ſovereign in all points in which, as ſovereign, he has a right to command. And above all things, and at all hazards, be faithful in rendering unto your God the honour and love and ſervice to which He is entitled. His hypocritical adverſaries *could not take hold of his words before the*

the people. They marvelled at the unexpected wiſdom of an anſwer, which they found incapable of being perverted to his prejudice. *They held their peace,* ſtruck dumb with ſurpriſe and diſappointment: and went away, covered with confuſion.

Let us direct our thoughts, under the divine bleſſing, to the general inſtruction, which this reply of our Lord conveys. It relates to two points cloſely connected: the duties which we owe to our governors; and the duties which we owe to our God.

I. The duties which ſubjects owe immediately to their governors may be compriſed under two heads; obedience and reſpect.

Obedience is to be rendered to governors in all things lawful; that is to ſay, in all things which are not contrary to the law of God, and are required by the law of the land. If a caſe were ſuppoſed, in which a governor were to order one of his ſubjects to perform an action which would be a breach of the divine commandments; the ſubject, whatever conſequences might await him, muſt refuſe compliance: becauſe God is at any riſk to be obeyed rather than man. Were the governor to require a proceeding to be carried into effect, which the laws of the land forbid:

the duty of the ſubject would be not to obey. For under God, the Law is ſovereign. The governor is bound no leſs than the ſubject to obey the laws of the land: and it is only by virtue of thoſe laws and according to thoſe laws that he is authoriſed to require obedience. Putting aſide, then, the neceſſarily excepted caſes of actions contrary to the law of God; the eſtabliſhed laws of the country, under which term are included ſuch public uſages and cuſtoms as are allowed to have the force of law, form the rule and meaſure of the obedience of the ſubject. According to theſe laws, *let every ſoul be ſubject unto the higher powers* (*c*). To theſe laws we are ſtrictly to conform ourſelves in all things. We are not to think that if we obey ſome of the laws, we may venture to diſregard others. We are to obey all: becauſe all reſt on the ſame authority. *Whoſoever therefore keepeth the whole law*, with the exception of *offending in one point, he is guilty of all*: guilty of deſpiſing the authority of the whole law, guilty of failing in his duty as a good ſubject. To all the officers by whom the laws are adminiſtered we are to render obedience; whether they are perſons in a higher ſtation, or in a lower; whatever may be the nature, or the denomi-

(*c*) Rom. xiii. 1.

nation

of their office; whether their juriſ-
n extend over the whole land, or be li-
to a county or to a pariſh. *Submit*
lves to every ordinance of man, for the
s ſake: whether it be to the King, as ſu-
e: or to Governors, to any inferior offi-
s of the law, *as unto them that are ſent by*
for the puniſhment of evil doers, and for the
ſe of them that do well (*d*). To every one
he perſons appointed to execute the laws
are to render obedience in all thoſe par-
ulars, in which he is authoriſed to demand
Render to all their dues: tribute to whom
bute is due, cuſtom to whom cuſtom (*e*). In
rticulars of the ſame kind with thoſe here
cified by the Apoſtle, namely in the pay-
nt of taxes and of other branches of the
blic revenue, perſons who would hold
mſelves deeply injured were their honeſty
integrity called into queſtion, are ſome-
es very blameable. They will contrive in
ious articles of taxation to pay leſs than
y ought to pay: perhaps by delivering
ctive accounts of the poſſeſſions or indul-
ces for which they are liable to a tax; or
ſtating their annual income below the
th; or by ſome other miſrepreſentation of
ch they are conſcious. Commodities

(*d*) 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. (*e*) Rom. xiii. 7.

which have been illegally introduced they will not heſitate to purchaſe; becauſe ſuch articles may be obtained for leſs money than thoſe, on which cuſtom has been paid. Remember therefore, that to defraud your governors in the diſcharge of taxes is to rob the public; is to rob all the inhabitants of the land; it is to rob your honeſt neighbour, who muſt diſcharge his portion of new taxes rendered neceſſary by the diſhoneſty of thoſe men, who do not ſuſtain their full ſhare of the exiſting burthens. Remember that to purchaſe ſmuggled or contraband goods is not only to rob the public; but is to commit a ſin reſembling that of buying articles which have been ſtolen. It is to purchaſe that which does not legally belong to the ſeller. It is to encourage him to perſevere in his habits of iniquity. Remember alſo, that he who has in any way been guilty of purloining, or of withholding, from his country, is bound to prove his repentance by reſtitution.

Obſerve farther, that your obedience to lawful authority is to ſpring, not from blind apprehenſion, but from religious principle. It is *for the Lord's ſake* that you are to ſubmit to every ordinance of man. You are to be ſubject to the higher powers, becauſe *there*

is

is no power but of God; becauſe *the powers that be*, whatever be the civil conſtitution of your country, *are ordained of God*; becauſe, *whoſoever reſiſteth the power reſiſteth the ordinance of God, and ſhall receive to himſelf condemnation*; becauſe the ruler is, in the office of governing, *the miniſter of God. Wherefore ye muſt needs be ſubject, not only for wrath,* not only through fear of incurring the anger of the ruler, and bringing down puniſhment upon yourſelf, *but for conſcience' ſake. For this cauſe,* for conſcience' ſake, *pay ye tribute alſo*; diſcharge your taxes faithfully: *for they,* whoſe office it is to collect the revenue, *are God's miniſters attending continually upon this very thing* (*f*).

In addition to obedience, reſpect is due to our rulers. If we are commanded to *render tribute to whom tribute is due, cuſtom to whom cuſtom*; we are alſo enjoined to *render fear to whom fear is due, honour to whom honour.* To thoſe who are ſet over us in the ſtate, we are uniformly to conduct ourſelves with the attention and deference to which they are entitled in conſequence of the offices which they fill. Such is the reverence due to the authority of the laws, that every individual to whom a portion, though it be a ſmall

(*f*) Rom. xiii. 1—6.

portion, of that authority is delegated, has a claim to reſpect. To *deſpiſe government, and to ſpeak evil of dignities*, are ſins enumerated by St. Jude and St. Peter as among the cleareſt proofs of preſumption, pride, and iniquity of heart: and enumerated as characteriſtic of the latter ages of the world. *Thou ſhalt not ſpeak evil of the ruler of thy people* (*g*). We are not forbidden to exerciſe our private judgement with modeſty and caution upon the conduct of our rulers in the management of public affairs, ſo far as we are able diſtinctly to underſtand their proceedings and their motives. But it is one thing to ſpeak with diffident diſcrimination: another, to defame and revile. It is one thing to expreſs an unfavourable opinion in the ſpirit of charity: another, to condemn with malignant pleaſure. It is one thing calmly and ſteadily to ſeek the removal of an unworthy miniſter of the law: another, to reproach the law. It is one thing ſoberly to exerciſe the liberties of a ſubject: another, to clamour amidſt the licentiouſneſs of faction. It is one thing to guard with vigilance the birthrights of ourſelves and of our countrymen: another, to depreciate and degrade that public authority,

(*g*) Acts, xxiii. 5.

by the ſtability of which thoſe birthrights are ſecured. Neither are we to be forgetful of our ignorance. How many important particulars, unſuſpected by us, concerning the councils of foreign powers, and the relative ſituation of our own country, may be known to our governors! How wiſely may they have determined, knowing theſe particulars, to adopt meaſures which to us in our ignorance appear fooliſh! Let us judge with humility: let us cenſure, if we cenſure, with forbearance. And let us not be unmindful, that we may praiſe as ignorantly as we condemn. Keeping aloof then from the blindneſs and the violence of party feelings, let us neither factiouſly *meddle with thoſe who are given to change* (*b*); nor buſily force ourſelves into notice as abettors of a particular ſet of political men. Let us quietly attend to the concerns which befit our ſtations: and while we honour all who make and all who adminiſter the laws, honour them not from motives of ſelf intereſt, but *for conſcience' ſake*.

There is yet a duty incumbent on every Chriſtian as a ſubject, in which his rulers, though it is not performed immediately to them, are more deeply intereſted than in

(*b*) Prov. xxiv. 21.

general

general they may ſuppoſe: namely, habitual and devout remembrance of them before the throne of grace. *I exhort that ſupplications prayers, interceſſions, and giving of thanks, be made for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty. For this is good and acceptable in the ſight of God our Saviour* (*i*). The ſucceſs of public counſels, and the national bleſſings enſuing from it, have probably been owing much leſs frequently to the talents of rulers, than to *the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous* among the people. The ſupplicants are living in obſcurity, poſſibly in contempt. But their voice aſcends to heaven; is heard by their Mediator, and prevails. For their ſakes, through that Mediator, rulers may be gifted with wiſdom not their own; and proſpered with ſucceſſes on which they had no pretenſions to calculate. Through that Mediator the prayers of theſe ſupplicants may obtain public bleſſings, for which the ruler may never have offered a petition. Through that Mediator, their interceſſion may avert calamities, which the ruler has neither deprecated nor foreſeen. Through that Mediator their thankſgivings may be accepted

(*i*) 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

for

for national mercies, which the ruler has neglected to acknowledge, or has acknowledged with cold formality.

II. God is equally the governor of us and of our rulers. He is Lord of lords, and King of kings. He is our creator, our preſerver, our redeemer, our ſanctifier. All his counſels are wiſdom; all his commandments holy, and juſt, and good. To Him therefore at all times, in all things, under every circumſtance, our immediate, and chearful, and unreſerved obedience is due. To perform His will in Chriſt Jeſus is life everlaſting. To provoke His indignation is certain perdition. To obey Him is the proof that we acknowledge Him as our ſovereign: that we love Him as our benefactor: that we ſeek from Him, from whom only it is to be derived, our true and unfading happineſs. Let us *render unto God the things which are God's*.

Can we conſider God as our creator, and deny that He has a right to govern the workmanſhip of His hands? If he has called us of his own ſpontaneous mercy from nothing into being; if he has ſurrounded us on earth with bleſſings ſuited to our preſent ſtate of exiſtence; if He has beſtowed

beſtowed upon us faculties qualifying us to know, to ſerve, and to glorify Him; if the ſervice which he requires from us is in every point reaſonable, righteous, conducive to our welfare: ſhall we not walk in His ways with thankful hearts? Shall we not honour Him with His own gifts? Not only is He our creator, but our preſerver. In Him we live, and move, and have our being. His eye conſtantly watches over us. His arm conſtantly protects us. He ſpares us, and continues his bleſſings to us, though we have rebelled againſt Him. He cauſes his ſun to ſhine on the evil as well as on the good; and ſendeth His rain on the unjuſt no leſs than on the juſt. Shall not we thank Him, ſhall not we thank Him not with our lips only but with our lives, for the prolongation of unmerited mercies? But He is alſo our redeemer. For our ſake and for our ſalvation He has given up His beloved ſon, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, partaker of His Godhead, one with Himſelf, to humiliation, ſuffering, and death, even to death upon the croſs. Has God ſo loved us; and ſhall not we love Him? Shall not we manifeſt our love to Him by keeping His commandments, by bringing forth much fruit to His glory? For He completes the plan of redemption by becoming

becoming our ſanctifier. He is ever preſent in the hearts of His ſervants by His ſpirit. He purifies them from their original corruption; delivers them from the dominion of the Devil; diſpoſes them to delight in His own ways; ſtrengthens them againſt temptation: in a word, creates them afreſh after His own image in Chriſt, by the influence of His omnipotent grace. Shall ſanctification freely offered be ſcorned? Shall grace be reſiſted? Shall we obſtinately harden ourſelves, leſt we ſhould be made the *temples of the Holy Ghoſt?* Let us turn in newneſs of heart and life to the Lord our God: let us renew our baptiſmal covenant with our Father who is in heaven. Let us confeſs with genuine humility and ſorrow how grievouſly and perſeveringly we have broken our vows. Let us plead for mercy through the appointed Saviour. Let us make the word of God, wherein His will is revealed to us, our ſtudy and our guide. Let the ſolemn determination of every one of us be this: *As for me and my houſe we will ſerve the Lord:* we will *ſerve the Lord Chriſt* (*j*). In faith, in piety, in love, in morality, in prayer, in thankſgiving, in patience, in ſubmiſſion, in univerſal obedience, let us ſtrive to walk worthy

(*j*) Joſh. xxiv. 15. Col. iii. 24.

of

of the vocation wherewith we are called. Renouncing for ourſelves the devil, the world, and the fleſh; labouring at all times by example, and where precept is admiſſible, by precept, to guard others againſt the ſnares of deſtruction, which thoſe enemies of all righteouſneſs continually ſpread: let us earneſtly ſeek through Chriſt to obtain the ſalvation of our ſouls, and to *be pure from the blood of all men.* Walking in the fear of the Lord; watchful to attract others into his paths; ſerving him in proſperity, in adverſity, under good report, under evil report; avowing Him as the Maſter, whoſe we are, and whom we ſerve; and ſeeking to be prepared for the hour, be its arrival ſooner or later, when He ſhall ſummon us from the world to render an account of our ſtewardſhip: let us ſhew that we have not received His grace in vain. *Bleſſed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments!*

In contemplating that branch of religion which conſiſts in *rendering unto Cæſar the things which are Cæſar's*; reflect on the motives which, in addition to the general obligation that reſted on the Jews, enforce upon yourſelves the duty of obedience to your governors. The government to which the

Jews

Jews were in ſubjection was arbitrary. Their rulers were foreigners, idolaters, conquerors who governed by the ſword. You live under a free conſtitution; under Chriſtian rulers; under rulers natives of your own land; under fixed, and equitable, and impartial laws; under laws deriving their force from the continued ſanction of your own repreſentatives. The intereſts of your rulers are your own: your intereſts their's. Let your obedience to thoſe in authority, and your gratitude to God, be proportioned to the mercies which you enjoy.

Beware of being ſeduced into diſcontent under thoſe mercies by the diſorganizing ſpirit which has raged in your own times. Anarchy is the forerunner of ſlavery. Whatever in other countries may have been hazarded, juſtifiably and unjuſtifiably, for the amelioration of deſpotic governments; remember, and give glory to God in remembering, that the Britiſh government is a government of freedom. Look to the Continent of Europe, and learn wiſdom, and contentment, and gratitude, and joy. Be not led aſtray from your Chriſtian duty as ſubjects, by ſuppoſing that you diſcover, or by actually diſcovering, blemiſhes either in the laws under which you live, or in the conduct

of

of thoſe who adminiſter them. There will be blemiſhes in both. Expect not in any human inſtitution theoretical perfection; expect not in any human agency practical perfection. The duty of a ruler, be it not only admitted but proclaimed, has been comprehenſively traced by Infinite Wiſdom: *The Spirit of the Lord ſpake, the God of Iſrael ſaid; He that ruleth over men muſt be juſt, ruling in the fear of God* (*k*). This command reaches in every country from the ſupreme magiſtrate to the loweſt; from the chief of the legiſlature to every individual entruſted with legiſlative power. Whoever bears a part in framing a law, will anſwer for his motives in framing it to God. Whoever has a ſhare in executing a law, will anſwer to God for his conduct in adminiſtering it. To their own maſter they ſtand or fall. But beware leſt failings on their part be deemed excuſes for breach of duty on yours. If a parent be a faulty character; are his children diſcharged from filial obedience? If a maſter be faulty, is a ſervant releaſed from his duty? I ſpeak of ordinary caſes of miſconduct in civil government. But even in caſes which approach to extremities, though the goſpel teaches not thoſe paſſive

(*k*) 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3.

doctrines,

doctrines, doctrines ſubverſive of all public liberty, which heretofore miſconceptions among its friends, and in later times the miſrepreſentations of its enemies, have deſcribed it as inculcating: yet unqueſtionably with reſpect to public, as to private injuries, it long inclines the balance to the ſide of forbearance. While it warrants the vindication of public rights no leſs than of private; it inculcates univerſally the ſpirit of gentleneſs, of long ſuffering, of moderation, of forgiveneſs, of peace.

Think farther, with reſpect to *the things* which are to be *rendered unto God*, how much clearer is the knowledge which you poſſeſs of the riches of the divine loving kindneſs and mercy, than that which had been attained by the Jews. Chriſt had not then made the great atonement. He had not arrived at the end of his public miniſtry. Life and immortality had not then been fully brought to light by the goſpel. Ought not your love to your Almighty Benefactor to be encreaſed in proportion to the bleſſings, which He has beſtowed upon you? Has Chriſt actually died for your ſins, and riſen again for your juſtification: and are you under no ſpecial ties to live unto Him?

Finally: rememember that obedience to

your governors and to your God, your duties as ſubjects and as Chriſtians, are never to be put aſunder. Mark the ſolicitude with which they are united in the Scriptures. *My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King* (*l*). *Render under Cæſar the things which are Cæſar's, and unto God the things that are God's* (*m*). *Fear God; honour the King* (*n*). They are the ſame perſons who are deſcribed as *denying the Lord who bought them*, and *as deſpiſing government and ſpeaking evil of dignities* (*o*). To be a good chriſtian and a bad ſubject is impoſſible. He who fears God, will honour the King, and all others by whom the laws are adminiſtered. And he who from Chriſtian motives honours the King and the ſubordinate miniſters of the law, gives a proof that he fears God.

(*l*) Prov. xxiv. 21. (*m*) Luke, xx. 25.
(*n*) 1 Pet. ii. 17. (*o*) 2 Pet. ii. 1—10.

SER-

SERMON XIV.

CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM illuſtrated by the CHARACTER of NEHEMIAH.

NEHEM. v. 15.

But ſo did not I, becauſe of the fear of God.

THE cavil which has been advanced againſt the goſpel, that patriotiſm is not enjoined as a chriſtian duty, needs little examination to diſprove it. What is patriotiſm? The love of our country. But what love? The bigoted love cheriſhed by the Jews, which impelled them to abominate every other nation as accurſed? The proud love, diſplayed by the Greeks, which deſpiſed the reſt of mankind as barbarians? The ſelfiſh love predominating among the Romans, and ſtimulating them to enſlave the world? No. Patriotiſm is that chriſtian love, which, while it reſpects as ſacred the rights and the welfare of every land, of every foreign individual, teaches us to manifeſt, within the limits of juſtice, ſpecial affection to our own

country, in proportion to the ſpecial ties by which we are united with the region that gives us birth. If our Lord then inculcated, by his own lips, or by the pen of his apoſtles, the univerſal obligation of juſtice and love: if, in regulating the exerciſe of juſtice and love, he pronounces that wrong and fraud are the more ſinful when directed againſt *the Brethren* (*a*); that while we *do good unto all men*, we are bound *ſpecially to do good unto them who are of the houſehold of faith* (*b*): that affections of more than ordinary ſtrength is mutually to be evinced between huſbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and ſiſters: He has decided that every additional tie by which man is connected with man is an obligation to additional love; He has eſtabliſhed the duty of patriotiſm, by eſtabliſhing the very principle from which the duty neceſſarily flows. If he bore with unwearied patience hatred and contempt and perſecution unto death, from his Jewiſh adverſaries: if He mourned with the moſt tender ſympathy over the impending deſtruction of Jeruſalem (*c*): if he repeated at a ſecond riſk of his life his efforts for the converſion of his countrymen the Nazarenes (*d*): by his own

(*a*) 1 Cor. vi. 8. (*b*) Gal. vi. 10. See alſo Rom. ix. 1—3. x. 1. xi. 14. (*c*) Matth. xxiii. 37. Luke, xiii. 34.
(*d*) Luke, iv. 16—30. Matth. xiii. 54. Mark, vi. 1—6.

conduct

conduct he ſanctioned patriotiſm, by his conduct he exemplified it, by his own conduct he commanded it.

Patriotiſm may glow with as pure a flame in the breaſt of a peaſant as of a monarch; in the ſhades of retirement as in the glare of obſervation. In perſons, however, who are eminent in rank, or called to public ſervices, the example is the more conſpicuous. It was under ſuch circumſtances that Nehemiah illuſtrated in his day that duty of Patriotiſm, which, though virtually declared in the Moſaic law, was by his countrymen little underſtood; and was ſubſequently, as we have ſeen, re-affirmed and practiſed by our Lord.

Nehemiah was by birth a Jew. His father, as it ſhould ſeem, had not accompanied his countrymen into the land of Iſrael, when they were permitted by Cyrus, after their captivity of ſeventy years, to return thither and rebuild Jeruſalem: but appears to have remained in Perſia. For we find Nehemiah an inhabitant of the city of Shuſhan, the capital of Perſia; and actually a reſident in the royal palace, in conſequence of having been raiſed to the honorable ſituation of cupbearer to Artaxerxes the King. While he was in this office, ſome of his brethren ar-

rived from Judæa, with lamentable accounts of the condition of the Jews. "*The remnant which are left,*" ſaid they, "*of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach. The wall of Jeruſalem alſo is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire* (*e*). Nehemiah was grieved to the heart by theſe tidings: and was filled with earneſt anxiety to obtain permiſſion from Artaxerxes to repair to Jeruſalem with power to build up and fortify the city. But before he offered his requeſt to the King, he addreſſed himſelf to a higher ſovereign. *He ſat down and wept and mourned certain days, and prayed before the God of heaven.* With deep humiliation he acknowledged the tranſgreſſions of himſelf and of his forefathers. He pleaded the ancient covenant mercifully eſtabliſhed with the people of Iſrael: and the promiſe given unto Moſes that if, when ſcattered for their wickedneſs among the heathen, they ſhould even from thence turn unto God, they ſhould receive forviveneſs, and ſhould again be ſecurely ſettled in their own land. *And now, O Lord,* ſaid he, *I beſeech Thee let thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy ſervant, and to the prayer of* the reſt of *thy ſervants who deſire to fear thy name: and proſper, I pray Thee, thy ſervant,*

(*e*) Nehem. i. 3.

this day, and grant him mercy in the ſight of this man. When Nehemiah preſented himſelf in the palace to diſcharge the duties of his poſt, the King diſcerned ſorrow painted upon his countenance. *Why*, enquired he, *is thy countenance ſad, ſeeing thou art not ſick? This is nothing elſe but ſorrow of heart.* Then was Nehemiah *very ſore afraid.* But having again lifted up his ſoul to God in prayer, in the ſilent prayer of the heart, he communicated to the King the cauſe of his diſtreſs: and being encouraged by his royal maſter to declare the extent of his wiſhes, ventured to ſubmit his petition that he might be ſent unto the land of Judah, unto the city of the ſepulchres of his fathers, with authority to build it. He, in whoſe rule and governance are the hearts of Kings, He who doth diſpoſe and turn them as ſeemeth beſt to his godly wiſdom, diſpoſed Artaxerxes to grant in the fulleſt meaſure the requeſts of Nehemiah. Without delay Nehemiah took his journey to Jeruſalem. There he found himſelf conſtantly ſurrounded by difficulties and dangers ariſing partly from the enmity of the neighbouring nations, partly from the treachery and the refractory conduct of many among the Jews whom he was to govern. By faithful perſeverance, however, in the path

of duty, and unſhaken dependence upon divine guidance and protection, he at length accompliſhed, after the labour of twelve years, the patriotic purpoſes for which he came. When he looked back on his paſt proceedings, he had the approving teſtimony of a good conſcience. It was on ſuch an occaſion that after being led to call to remembrance the actions of ſome of his predeceſſors, in whom ſelfiſhneſs appears to have chilled or overpowered the love of their country, he was able to affirm concerning himſelf, with thankful humility: *But ſo did not I, becauſe of the fear of God.*

Theſe words contain a true deſcription of the general tenor of his life. Let us examine ſome of the particulars by which this fact is eſtabliſhed; and endeavour, under the divine bleſſing, to apply to ourſelves the inſtruction which they convey.

I. Nehemiah was placed at the court of the King of Perſia, the moſt powerful monarch of the age; was domeſticated in the palace itſelf; and was entruſted with an office regarded in thoſe days as highly honourable and important. The magnificence of the Eaſt was ſpread before him. Rank, emolument, authority, were in his poſſeſſion. All the

the good things, as they are termed, of this world, were at his command. Was his heart, then, fixed upon them? Was he determined at all hazards to retain them? No. Eaſe and affluence and dignity, and the other enjoyments which lay within the graſp of Nehemiah, are ſo attractive and enſnaring, that moſt men who poſſeſs them ſet their affections upon them, and are willing to reſort to very unwarrantable methods of preſerving them. But ſo did not Nehemiah. Of his own accord he reſigned them all. Why? *Becauſe of the fear of God*: fear manifeſting itſelf in love to his own countrymen for the ſake of God. All that worldly men deem valuable Nehemiah reſigned, that in obedience to the will and for the furtherance of the glory of God, he might *ſeek the welfare* of his deſpiſed and oppreſſed brethren *the children of Iſrael*; and ſettle them in ſafety in the land of their fathers, and rebuild the Holy City. He perceived that to *Him who knoweth* how *to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is ſin* (*f*). He perceived that even ſuch of the gratifications of Perſia, as might in themſelves be innocent, would to him be polluted with guilt: ſince by retaining them he would be prevented from effecting the good, which he

(*f*) James, iv. 17.

might hope to be made the inſtrument of accompliſhing in Judæa. In the ſpirit of his revered countryman Moſes, *He choſe rather to ſuffer affliction with his brethren the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon. By faith he eſteemed the reproach of Chriſt greater riches than the treaſures of* Perſia: *for he had reſpect unto the recompenſe of the reward* (*g*).

Are you, my brethren, prepared to tread in the footſteps of this righteous man? Are you prepared to imitate his patriotic ſelf-denial, to imitate it, *becauſe of the fear of God?* Bring your paſt conduct to your recollection. When you have been called upon in your capacity of citizens and ſubjects to take up your croſs and follow Chriſt, to make ſacrifices of honour, or of profit, or of reputation, or of comfort, or of eaſe, for the purpoſe of benefiting your native land, and ſhewing love to your countrymen for the ſake of your Redeemer: how have you acted? Have you been accuſtomed to make ſuch ſacrifices cheerfully? Have you been accuſtomed to make them as frequently as they have been demanded? Have you been accuſtomed to make them to the extent which duty preſcribed? Obſerve how large were the ſa-

(*g*) Heb. xi. 25, 26.

crifices

crifices ſpontaneouſly made by Nehemiah in compariſon with thoſe, in which any of us have been required to acquieſce. The ſmaller the ſacrifices to which we refuſe to ſubmit, the ſtronger are the ſymptoms of lukewarmneſs in our hearts towards God, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, of devotedneſs to ſelfiſh paſſions, of deficiency in chriſtian patriotiſm.

II. When the firſt body of the Jews had returned in the reign of Cyrus from their captivity; the Samaritans, *the adverſaries of Judah*, applied, as we learn from the book of Ezra, to be admitted to join in rebuilding the temple at Jeruſalem. *They came to Zerubbabel and the chief of the fathers, and ſaid unto them; Let us build with you. For we ſeek your God as ye do: and we do ſacrifice unto Him ſince the days of Eſarhaddon King of Aſſur, who brought us hither.* But as theſe people were not Jews by deſcent, and as they perſiſted in worſhipping their own idols in conjunction with the true God: the elders of Iſrael refuſed, conformably to the divine law, to have any connection with them: and anſwered; *Ye have nothing to do with us to build an houſe to our God. But we ourſelves together will*

will build unto the Lord God of Iſrael (*b*). When Nehemiah was come to repair the city, he appears to have received a ſimilar propoſal from the enemies of the Jews. For his anſwer, recorded by himſelf, to remonſtrances urged on their part, bears a cloſe reſemblance to that which was returned in the former inſtance. *The God of heaven will proſper us: therefore we His ſervants will ariſe and build. But ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jeruſalem.* By entering into confederation with the perſons who made the propoſition, Nehemiah might probably have eſcaped many of the troubles which hung over him: and if he had harboured any project for aggrandiſing himſelf, he might have provided for its ſucceſs. Many of his countrymen, as we ſhall ſpeedily diſcover, and thoſe too of the higheſt rank, not only among the nobles, but even among the prieſts, leagued themſelves in the cloſeſt union with the very perſons in queſtion. But ſo did not Nehemiah, *becauſe of the fear of God.* With theſe men, men, be it remembered, whoſe hoſtility to the welfare of Iſrael was incontrovertible, he ſteadfaſtly refuſed to connect himſelf. He meditated no injury againſt them. He wiſhed them no evil. Had circumſtances

(*b*) Ezra, iv. 1—3.

brought

brought himſelf and them under the ſame roof; his deportment to them would have been, as to all men, mild and courteous. Had buſineſs cauſed them neceſſarily to have tranſactions, each with the other; he would have conducted himſelf towards them, as towards all men, with uprightneſs and with liberality. But he would have no partnerſhip with them: no union of plans and projects: no intimacy: no voluntary ſociety. *What fellowſhip hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs? What communion hath light with darkneſs? What part hath he that believeth with an infidel? What agreement hath the temple of God with idols* (*i*)? Such were the views which decided the conduct of Nehemiah.

In this branch of patriotiſm are you, my brethren, imitators, according to your ſeveral ſtations, of Nehemiah? *Becauſe of the fear of God*, do you diſcountenance unrighteouſneſs among your countrymen by carefully avoiding familiarity with irreligious perſons? Of wicked men there is unhappily ſo exuberant an abundance, that the common neceſſities of life will frequently throw you into their circle, and occaſion dealings to take place between you. And to the wicked, as

(*i*) 2 Cor. vi. 14—16.

towards

towards others, you are to be gentle, juſt, and kind. But you are to have no fellowſhip with them. *What concord hath Chriſt with Belial?* For the ſake of God, if you love Him, you will determine to ſeek your friends and aſſociates among thoſe who love Him. For the ſake of your countrymen, if you love them, you will ſtrengthen yourſelf in that determination. Intercourſe with the wicked, when neceſſary, you will ſecretly lament: when not neceſſary, you will diligently ſhun. And never will you be induced by ſchemes of private intereſt to aſſociate yourſelf with the machinations of men, whom you aſſuredly know to be enemies to your country.

III. Nehemiah faithfully perſevered in his patriotic exertions in the face of continual diſcouragement and danger. When the ancient enemies of the Jews heard of his arrival; *it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to ſeek the welfare of the children of Iſrael* (*k*). They laboured by every ſpecies of artful management to deter him from proceeding in his undertaking. Firſt they aſſailed him and his countrymen with the ſhafts of contempt and ridicule. *When San-*

(*k*) Nehem. ii. 10.

ballat

ballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geſhem the Arabian heard it; they laughed us to ſcorn, and deſpiſed us. And Sanballat mocked the Jews, and ſpake before his brethren, and the army of Samaria, and ſaid; What do theſe feeble Jews? Will they fortify themſelves? Will they ſacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the ſtones out of the heaps of the rubbiſh which are burnt? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him: and he ſaid, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he ſhall even break down their ſtone-wall. Many, we may conceive, of the builders felt themſelves diſpirited by theſe taunts, and tempted to abandon the work. So did not Nehemiah. He prayed to the Lord Almighty. *Hear, O our God, for we are deſpiſed; and turn their reproach upon their own head* (*l*): and ſteadily puſhed forward the building. His adverſaries, diſcerning this method of attack to be ineffectual, had recourſe to threatenings and violence. They charged the Jews with a deſign of rebelling againſt the King of Perſia. They ſpread reports that Nehemiah purpoſed to ſet himſelf up as King in Jeruſalem. They treacherouſly ſent meſſengers to invite him to a conference, that they might have an oppor-

(*l*) Nehem. ii. 19. iv. 1—4.

tunity

tunity of deſtroying him. They perſecuted him with menacing letters. They ſtirred up adverſaries againſt him among his own people. They hired falſe prophets to terrify him with alarming predictions; and purſued this ſcheme with the greater eagerneſs, in conſequence of being well aware that if they could prevail even ſo far only as to cauſe him to manifeſt ſymptoms of fear, there would be an end of all reſolution and exertion among the Jews. Of the nobles of Judah, ſome had ſhown themſelves from the beginning averſe to the righteous and public-ſpirited deſigns of Nehemiah; *and put not their necks to the work of the Lord.* And many of them being now gained over to the meaſures of Tobiah, in conſequence of the connection which he and his ſon had formed with theſe traitors by marriages, *ſent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them: for there were many in Judah ſworn unto him*: and they informed him of *the words* of Nehemiah (*m*). In the mean time war had been prepared. *Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Aſhdodites conſpired all of them together to come and to fight againſt Jeruſalem, and to*

(*m*) See Nehem. iv.—and vi. 17—19.

hinder.

hinder the completion of the building; and ſaid, *They ſhall not know, neither ſee, till we come in the midſt among them and ſlay them, and cauſe the work to ceaſe.* Nehemiah was not ignorant of their intentions. Many of the Jews who dwelt on the borders of thoſe adverſaries of Iſrael came to Jeruſalem, and repeatedly ſaid; *From all places whence ye ſhall return unto us they will be upon you.* At the proſpect of theſe dangers the people, who at firſt *had a mind to the work*, were diſmayed, and ſeemed on the point of relinquiſhing the undertaking in deſpair. *Judah ſaid: The ſtrength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbiſh; ſo that we are not able to build the wall.* All Judah trembled. But ſo did not Nehemiah. He feared God: and becauſe he feared God, he was not diſmayed before man. In this emergency, how did he conduct himſelf? *We made our prayer*, ſaith he, *unto our God; and ſet a watch againſt them day and night, becauſe of them. In the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places* he *ſet the people after their families with their ſwords, their ſpears, and their bows.* He diligently exhorted the nobles and the rulers and the reſt of the people not to be afraid: *but remember the Lord which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your ſons and your*

daughters, your wives, and your houſes. His exhortations were ſucceſsful. All the people *returned to the wall, every one unto his work.* From that day forward the walls preſented, according to the wiſe arrangements of Nehemiah, a very uncommon ſpectacle: the union of buſy induſtry with conſtant readineſs for battle. One half of the people were employed at the work. Beſide them the other half were drawn up in array, armed with ſpears and ſhields, and other implements of war. Even the workmen themſelves, *they which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with thoſe that laded, every one of them with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his ſword girded by his ſide; and ſo builded.* So the people *laboured in the work: and half of them held their ſpears, from the riſing of the morning until the ſtars appeared.* Behind them ſtood the rulers of Judah, to ſuperintend and to encourage the workmen and thoſe who were to guard them. Where is Nehemiah himſelf? Nehemiah, entruſted with the whole, anxious for the whole, accompanied by the officer whoſe poſt it is to ſound the trumpet, is continually moving from place to place. He inſpects the progreſs of the work; iſſues needful directions; provides

provides againſt aſſaults. And *becauſe*, ſaith he to the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, *becauſe the work is great and large, and we are ſeparated upon the wall one far from another: in what place ye hear the ſound of the trumpet, reſort ye thither unto us. Our God ſhall fight for us.*

To perſevere unto the end in every branch of the ſervice of the Lord Jeſus is the duty and the diſtinguiſhing mark of a chriſtian. It is by temptations continually preſenting themſelves that perſeverance is put to the proof. *Bleſſed* then *is the man who endureth temptation* (*n*), who ſuſtains the trial, whatever form it may aſſume, and is not weary of well-doing. Does this deſcription apply to you as lovers of your native ſoil? Obſerve Nehemiah, under the various forms of temptation by which his religious ſpirit of patriotiſm was beſet, ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. When trials, the ſame as to their nature with thoſe which he withſtood, but ſuited in their particular circumſtances to your own ſituation as ſubjects and citizens, have been ſent to put you to the proof; what has been the event? If, in this ſubdiviſion of chriſtian obedience, you have been a follower *of that*

(*n*) James, i. 12. v. 11.

which is good; you may have been called, perhaps frequently called, to ſuſtain the ſmart of ridicule. Your conſcientious forbearance for your country's ſake from ſelfiſh indulgence you may have heard repreſented as ſcrupulous folly. Your faithful ſolicitude to fulfil the demands which your country makes upon your integrity, your abilities, your exertion, you will know to have been ſtigmatiſed as abſurd preciſeneſs. Have ridicule and ſcorn turned you aſide from your purpoſe? Has falſe ſhame enſnared you into imitation of men, whoſe ſolicitude is only for themſelves? Or have you remained firm, like Nehemiah; firm *becauſe of the fear of God?* When the ſcoffers ſaw that they could not ſhake his ſtedfaſtneſs by ſneers and contempt; they immediately became falſe accuſers, and charged him with a treaſonable deſign of rebelling againſt the King of Perſia. Still he remained firm in his courſe. If the worldly-minded, after endeavouring to impel you by taunts and ſarcaſms into their own intereſted meaſures, have proceeded to *ſpeak evil of you*; have you remained ſtedfaſt in righteouſneſs? Have you quietly committed your cauſe to God; and laboured by well-doing to put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men, and to make them aſhamed who falſely accuſed your good

good converſation in Chriſt as upright friends of your country? Nehemiah found traitors among his own people. Nay ſome of the very perſons, from whom he might juſtly have expected the moſt faithful counſel and the moſt active ſupport, he diſcovered to be in confederacy with the enemies of Iſrael. Still he perſevered in his duty. It may be poſſible that among your own friends, and even in your own family, there may be individuals who are highly dangerous to your political integrity; individuals who by the principles which they recommend, by the opinions which they uphold, by the examples which they diſplay before you, practically take part with the ignorant or the unprincipled; and countenance, more or leſs, the violence of partiſans, or the artifice of the factious, or the reveries of projectors, or the ſchemes of the ſelfiſh, or the apathy of the lukewarm. If this be one of the trials which you have experienced; have you ſhewn by calm but ſteady reſiſtance that you would not ſurrender your conſcience to human connections, or to human authority? Nehemiah, when he became aware of the perils by which he was ſurrounded, though he was not terrified even into a momentary dereliction of his purpoſe, nor into tranſient coldneſs in the

purſuit of his object, did not neglect the precautions and preparations which the emergency required. Have you in this reſpect imitated his example? Have you ſtudied to fortify yourſelf according to the word of God, and by the fear of God, againſt your ſpecific temptations to deficiency in patriotiſm; to ſtrengthen yourſelf the moſt carefully where you perceived yourſelf the weakeſt; and, ſo far as in you lay, to leave no part unprovided againſt an attack? Nehemiah ſhrunk not, in his country's cauſe, from any perſonal hardſhip. Conſtantly employed from the riſing of the morning until the ſtars of evening appeared, in encouraging his countrymen to rebuild the city of their God, and in oppoſing the deſigns of their enemies; he had not even the ordinary comforts which attend repoſe after labour. *So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my ſervants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, ſaving that every one put them off for waſhing.* Have you ſubmitted to privations, have you endured hardſhips, if emergencies have required them, for the land of the ſepulchres of your fathers? Have you cheerfully ſuſtained the burdens deemed eſſential to national ſecurity? Have you been faithful and watchful in the diſcharge of your public duties; anxious

ious to diſcern the methods in which you may contribute to the general welfare; anxious to adopt each in its time, and place, and proportion; anxious by ſeaſonable exhortation and counſel to induce others alſo to bear hardſhips for their fellow-ſubjects, and to approve themſelves in the ſight of their God as genuine lovers of their country? How many men, in different periods, (I ſpeak without any ſpecial reference to preſent times,) who have ſtood forward among the loudeſt in profeſſions of patriotic zeal, have ſoon been among the loudeſt of the complainers under ſome temporary preſſure indiſpenſable to the public ſafety? How many of thoſe who have been deemed ready at any given moment to *cut off the right hand*, and to *pluck out the right eye*, in their country's cauſe, for the ſake of Chriſt; have not forborne, through love to Him, from repining even at ſmall difficulties and ſmall ſacrifices in its ſervice! Can each of you appeal to the ſearcher of hearts, and ſay with Nehemiah, ſo did not I?

Other inſtances in which this eminent ſervant of the Lord of Hoſts manifeſted, by acting differently from men whoſe minds are fixed on ſelfiſh ends, his faithfulneſs to that

ruling principle, which determined his conduct, and led him to conſiſtent and perſevering patriotiſm, will be developed in a ſubſequent diſcourſe. Let thoſe parts of Nehemiah's hiſtory which have been explained become ſubjects of private meditation. Let us earneſtly implore the Giver of all good to ſtrengthen us by His all-ſufficient grace, that in the diſcharge of our duties to our country we may for His ſake ſit light to worldly eaſe, and indulgence, and emolument, and ambition; that for His ſake we may uphold that *righteouſneſs which exalteth a nation* (*o*), uphold it not only by practical holineſs, but by ſtedfaſtly keeping aloof from familiarity with the wicked; that neither ridicule, nor ſlander, nor fear may influence us, when treading the path of chriſtian patriotiſm, to turn aſide or to ſlacken our pace: but that *in labours, in watchings, by pureneſs, by the Holy Ghoſt, by love unfeigned, by evil report, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteouſneſs on the right hand and on the left, we may in all things approve ourſelves as the ſervants of God* (*p*), to the benefit of our native land, and the glory of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

(*o*) Prov. xiv. 34. (*p*) 2 Cor. vi. 4—8.

SER-

SERMON XV.

CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM illuſtrated by the CHARACTER of NEHEMIAH.

NEHEM. v. 15.

But ſo did not I, becauſe of the fear of God.

IN the preceding diſcourſe, the character of Nehemiah conſidered with reſpect to patriotiſm has unfolded much of its excellence. In contemplating this ſervant of God, we beheld, in the firſt place, his decided diſregard of ſplendor, luxury, and indulgence, that he might *ſeek the welfare of Iſrael*: ſecondly, his ſtedfaſt refuſal either of union or of intimacy with the enemies of the Jews: and thirdly, his firmneſs in the cauſe of his country againſt ridicule and againſt violence, his watchful circumſpection, his patient and perſevering endurance of hardſhip. We are now to attend to other circumſtances in his public conduct, under which he was equally bleſt with the teſtimony of an approving conſcience.

IV. It

IV. It has not been very uncommon for perſons in high ſituations to wink at wrong proceedings in thoſe over whom they are inveſted with authority, through fear of giving offence, or for the purpoſe of more eaſily accompliſhing ſome end of their own. When Saul, inſtead of deſtroying the flocks and herds of the Amalekites according to the expreſs commandment of God, had brought them into the camp of Iſrael: he confeſſed that he had acted thus, becauſe he *feared the people and obeyed their voice*. Other inſtances of ſinful compliance on the part of the Kings of Iſrael with the inclinations and practices of their ſubjects might be produced. So did not Nehemiah. He did *not hate his* countrymen *in his heart in ſuffering ſin upon them* (*a*). He did not ſhrink from any riſk of offending perſons of the higheſt rank and the moſt commanding influence among them, when they diſobeyed the law of their God. Being appriſed that the men of wealth among the Jews had rendered themſelves maſters of the property and the perſons of their poorer brethren by means of uſurious mortgages, he *was very angry when he heard the cry* (*b*) of the diſtreſſed, and *rebuked the nobles and the rulers, and ſet a great aſſembly againſt them*; and con-

(*a*) Levit. xix. 17. (*b*) Nehem. v. 1, &c.

ſtrained

ſtrained them to enter into a ſolemn engagement that they would reſtore the whole of their unjuſt acquiſitions: and bound the prieſts by oath to act according to a ſimilar promiſe. Some time afterwards, Eliaſhib the high prieſt, in direct violation of the law of Moſes, which excluded the Ammonites from the congregation of God for ever, prepared for Tobiah the Ammonite, with whom he had contracted affinity, a ſpacious chamber in the very courts of the Temple; a chamber which had been appointed for the reception of meat-offerings and frankincenſe and veſſels and other articles for the ſervice of the Levites (*c*). Nehemiah in the mean time was abſent on a journey to Babylon. But as ſoon as he returned to Jeruſalem, and heard of the unrighteous deeds of Eliaſhib; regardleſs of the high ſituation and powerful connections of the man, he caſt forth all the furniture of the intruder out of the chamber, and reſtored the place to its proper uſe. He then diſcovered that the portions of the Levites had not been delivered unto them: and that in conſequence the Levites and the ſingers had retired every man to his poſſeſſion in the country; and that the houſe of God was forſaken (*d*). Immediately he *contended with*

(*c*) Nehem. xiii. 4, &c. (*d*) Nehem. xiii. 10, &c.

the

the rulers, who were the authors of this injury; and cauſed the Levites to be again collected; and corn and wine and oil for their ſupport to be brought in the full quantities preſcribed by the Law: and appointed treaſures ſelected becauſe *they were counted faithful*, whoſe office was to receive the ſtores, and *to diſtribute unto their brethren*; that the recurrence of abuſes might be prevented. About the ſame time Nehemiah perceived that numbers in Jeruſalem groſsly profaned the Sabbath, by making it a day of worldly labour and of merchandiſe. Of this wickedneſs alſo the nobles of Judah were the principle promoters. But Nehemiah, becauſe he feared God, again *contended with them*; and by his vigorous interference completely remedied the evil (*e*). Another inſtance is yet to be mentioned. Some of the people had married wives from the neighbouring heathen nations, from Aſhdod and Ammon and Moab. Even the daughter of Sanballat, the great enemy of the Jews, was eſpouſed by a grandſon of the high prieſt (*f*). This deſpiſer of the divine commandment, Nehemiah chaſed from him. And as to his aſſociates in iniquity, he *contended with them*; denounced a ſolemn curſe againſt them, if

(*e*) Nehem. xiii. 15—22. (*f*) Nehem. xiii. 28.

they

they ſhould perſiſt in their unlawful connections; inflicted on ſome of them corporal puniſhment; and compelled all to diſmiſs their foreign wives, and to pledge themſelves by oath no more to tranſgreſs thus againſt their God.

Have you, my brethren, followed, ſo far as circumſtances may have required you, the example of Nehemiah diſplayed in this branch of his conduct? If you have been brought to the alternative either of diſpleaſing God by ſilence and ſupineneſs; or of offending your countrymen, men connected with yourſelf, men whoſe favour was of high importance to you, by teſtifying, when duty has called for your teſtimony, againſt ſome evil proceeding on their part, and by exerting your influence, whether it has been greater or leſs, to prevent it: what has been your choice? Have you imitated Nehemiah? Have you *followed the Lord fully?* Becauſe you feared God, have you diſregarded private advantage? Have you withſtood the attractions of popularity? Have you ſubdued ambition? Have you broken the chains of party? Or have you acquieſced in the ſinful meaſures of other men, awed by their power, anxious for their countenance; and ſought for plauſible excuſes to quiet your ſcruples, and to

ſatisfy your mind that it was not incumbent on yourſelf to interfere? If we are at any time reduced to ſuch a trial; let us diſcharge our conſciences, modeſtly, but firmly; and caſt our intereſts, our character, and our cares upon God who careth for us. Let us not deſert Him: and he will never forſake us. Let worldly ſolicitude and falſe ſhame give place to reverence of the Lord of Hoſts.

V. A ſingular and deciſive inſtance of patriotic diſintereſtedneſs on the part of Nehemiah in his conduct as Governor of the Jews muſt be noticed. It is cuſtomary, and it is moſt evidently reaſonable, that rulers ſhould be ſupported at the expenſe of the people, for whoſe benefit they are entruſted with juriſdiction; and to whoſe ſervice they dedicate their time, talents, and exertions. The former governors of the Jews had exerciſed their right of *being chargeable unto the people*; and had received from them bread, and wine, and money. *But ſo did not I*, ſays Nehemiah, uttering on this particular occaſion the words of the text; *But ſo did not I, becauſe of the fear of God. From the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah*, namely, during *twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor.* Yet

Yet Nehemiah was ſubjected by his office to extremely burthenſome expences. He appears regularly to have admitted to his table an hundred and fifty of the Jews, their rulers included; and was alſo obliged to furniſh proviſions for the ſtrangers who came to him from the heathen nations on all ſides. *Yet for all this*, he adds, *required not I the bread of the Governor: becauſe the bondage was heavy upon this people.* He obſerved that his countrymen, in the diſtreſſed ſituation of their affairs, could not ſupply without much additional embarraſſment the ſalary and the neceſſaries to which their governor was entitled. He therefore refuſed to receive any thing from them.

To recede from our rights, when duty does not compel us to inſiſt upon them, and when the glory of God and the benefit of our neighbour will manifeſtly be promoted by our forbearance, is an act of Chriſtian obedience acceptable in the ſight of our Maker and Redeemer. St. Paul, that he might not be chargeable to the Theſſalonians, would not receive from them the maintainance to which the Lord Jeſus Chriſt had pronounced all his miniſters entitled, but laboured with his hands by night and by day, that he might procure for himſelf

himſelf food and raiment (*g*). At Corinth and at Epheſus he conducted himſelf in the ſame manner (*h*). What has been your conduct, my brethren, in caſes to which the example of Nehemiah, and the correſponding example of St. Paul, have been applicable? Have you willingly departed from your juſt demands; have you waved your lawful privileges; have you cheerfully ſubjected yourſelf to voluntary loſſes and ſacrifices, from love to God and to your country? Or have you ſtiffly contended for every particle of your right; and regarded yourſelf as governed by a religious and patriotic ſpirit, becauſe you did not deſire to treſpaſs on the rights, or to leſſen the common immunities, of your neighbour? Have you reflected on the confidence which unequivocal diſintereſtedneſs commands; and on the enlarged opportunities which, by means of that confidence it opens, of benefiting your fellow-citizens by your talents, and by every other inſtrument of good which Providence has committed to your ſtewardſhip? Whatever have hitherto been your views, whatever has been your practice; imitate from the preſent moment the pious governor of Iſrael. And,

(*g*) 1 Theſſ. ii. 6—9.
(*h*) Acts, xviii. 3. xx. 34. 1 Cor. ix. 4—18.

above

above all human patterns of imitation, remember the Son of God; who, for a ſeaſon, reſigned his native glories, that in a ſtate of abaſement and ſuffering he might glorify his heavenly Father, and purchaſe for you life eternal. By precept and by example He has equally taught you to *lay down your lives for your brethren*; and of courſe to ſcruple no inferior ſacrifice.

VI. If we ſearch the page of hiſtory for narratives of the proceedings of men who have been called to the office of rebuilding deſolated cities, or of eſtabliſhing new colonies in uncultivated regions; we ſhall diſcover that the intereſts of religion have uſually been eſteemed only a ſecondary concern. Bulwarks are raiſed, private dwellings are erected, fields are tilled, harbours, if the ocean be at hand, are prepared, before the houſe of God receives its covering, perhaps before its foundations are laid. Safety, and ſuſtenance, and ſhelter, convenience, and agriculture, and trade, employ the head, and occupy the heart. "Let theſe eſſential ob-
"jects be ſecured; and then we ſhall have
"leiſure to conſult on meaſures for pro-
"moting piety and morality." How often has this language, ſpeaking by actions, been

heard in modern ages! And was it not heard in ancient times? Was it not the language of the Jews, when they returned from the Babylonian captivity? Let the Prophet, whom God commiſſioned to reprove them, ſatisfy the enquiry: *Thus ſpeaketh The Lord of Hoſts, ſaying; This people ſaith, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's houſe ſhould be built. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, ſaying: Is it time for you to dwell in your cieled houſes, and this houſe lie waſte* (*i*)? The rulers of Judah in that day appear to have put forth too little exertion for the purpoſe of rouſing the people to their duty. *But ſo did not Nehemiah, becauſe of the fear of God.* He knew that, *except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain*; and that the Divine protection ought not to be preſumed, where glory is not in the firſt place rendered unto the Lord. He laid to heart the words of God, when, by His prophet, He developed His judgements on the ſelfiſhneſs of the former Jews, who preferred their private concerns to His glory. *Ye have ſown much, and bring in little: ye eat, but ye have not enough: ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink: ye clothe you, but there is none warm;*

(*i*) Haggai, i. 2—4.

and

and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little: and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts? Becauſe of Mine houſe that is waſte; and ye run every man to his own houſe. Therefore the heaven over you is ſtayed from dew, and the earth is ſtayed from her fruit (*j*). The buildings indeed of the Temple Nehemiah does not appear to have found in a ſtate of decay. But the worſhip of the Lord in His ſanctuary was ſo neglected, and the diligence and the earneſtneſs of Nehemiah in re-eſtabliſhing it were uniformly ſo faithful, that in reviewing his paſt life, he felt himſelf authoriſed humbly to plead his good deeds, which he had done for the houſe of his God, and for the offices thereof (*k*). Some of theſe good deeds we have already had occaſion to notice; and others, were it not that the preſent head of this diſcourſe would be too far extended, might be produced. His general ſolicitude reſpecting all the concerns of religion has alſo been repeatedly ſhewn; and will diſcloſe itſelf by many additional inſtances to all who attentively read his hiſtory. The dedication of the walls of Jeruſalem became, under his

(*j*) Haggai, i. 6—10. (*k*) Nehem. xiii. 14.

direction and ſuperintendence, a moſt ſolemn and impreſſive act of devotion (*l*). And it was accompanied with meaſures ſpecifically deſigned to enſure the continuance and the regular celebration of the public worſhip of God (*m*).

Examine yourſelves, whether there has been evinced, according to your ſtations, a reſemblance in your own actions to that part of Nehemiah's conduct which has been deſcribed. Has it been your determination and your practice to promote, beyond every other object, the kingdom of God and His righteouſneſs? When buſied in your private occupations, when acting in any public capacity for your country; have you felt it your firſt concern to ſerve your Maker who is in heaven, to advance at home and abroad His glory among men? Have you kept earthly projects and temporal intereſts ſubordinate, duly ſubordinate, to the intereſts of eternity? While you have been eager to render your reſidence completely commodious, perhaps thewy and magnificent; have you coldly ſurveyed the houſes of God in your land, perhaps the very houſe of God in which you preſent yourſelf before Him, mouldering in dilapidation, or ſqualid through penurious

(*l*) Nehem. xii. 27—43. (*m*) Nehem. xii. 44—47.

neglect:

neglect? Have you ſtretched out a liberal hand to ſuſtain the hallowed edifices, and to grace them with decent ornament? Have you exerted yourſelf to procure the enlargement of their dimenſions, and the increaſe of their number, in proportion to the augmented population of the diſtrict; and thus to leſſen the growing and too juſt reproach, that in many of our cities, and even in the crowded parts of the country, our eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment no longer furniſhes adequate ſpace within its conſecrated walls, that the goſpel may be preached to the poor (*n*)? And have your liberality and your exertions flowed not from a ſpirit of formality, not from policy, not from oſtentation, but from the power of godlineſs upon your mind; from an earneſt deſire to prove your reverence for your Almighty Father, and your love of your countrymen for His ſake, by upholding His ſacred inſtitutions? Happy are they who, when they ſee men poſtponing the general concerns of religion to the purſuit of riches, or to the demands of preſent convenience, are able truly to ſay; *But ſo did not I, becauſe of the fear of God!*

VII. Not only the patriotic feeling, but the patriotic wiſdom of Nehemiah, was ma-

(*n*) See Note (A) at the end of the volume.

nifeſted in the motive, which we are warranted, by his avowal of it on a ſignal occaſion, to regard as habitually guiding him in the ſelection of men to be placed in ſtations of political authority. *I gave Hananiah, ruler of the palace, charge over Jeruſalem; for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many* (o).

Nehemiah was convinced that conſiſtency in right actions muſt be deduced from ſtedfaſtneſs in right principles: that he who ſlights the higheſt obligation, will not be deſerving of confidence as to the diſcharge of an inferior duty: that no man can be faithful in obedience to the ſecond of the great commandments, who lives not under the habitual guidance of the firſt. "What "muſt be the man, in whom I may repoſe "the government of Jeruſalem with entire "perſuaſion that my countrymen will thus "enjoy the bleſſings of a faithful admini-"ſtration of their affairs? He muſt be a "man eminent for the fear of God." Such was the language of Nehemiah. Would it have been your's? Under correſponding circumſtances, has your language, has the language of your heart, been ſimilar? According to what principle have you exerciſed the

(o) Nehem. vii. 2.

portion

portion of political influence, with which the free conſtitution of your country has entruſted you? You poſſeſs a voice, it may be, in the appointment of the repreſentatives of the nation. In appreciating the qualifications of thoſe on whoſe behalf it has been ſolicited, has the fear of God been a leading object in your thoughts? Has a clear ſuperiority in genuine religion turned the wavering ſcale? Or have you preferred a ſelfiſh man, or an ambitious man, or a profligate, becauſe he was your connection, or your neighbour, to a competitor, who, with all other adequate attainments, *feared God above many?* Perhaps your rank in life gives you weight in the nomination to various offices of public truſt. Perhaps, like Nehemiah, you may yourſelf hold a ſtation of predominating authority; and be, in conſequence, entitled to the diſpoſal of poſts of dignity and power. Have you ſupported, have you ſingled out men who, in conjunction with neceſſary talents and acquiſitions, were characteriſed by the fear of the Moſt High? If you have knowingly aſſigned the preference to other men, you have not ſelected the perſons likely to be *faithful.* You have ſhewn yourſelf perſonally deficient in the fear of God; and ignorant or regardleſs of one of the main branches of patriotiſm.

VIII. There is yet another particular in Nehemiah's character which we muſt not overlook. He did not act in his own ſtrength, nor take the glory of his patriotic deeds to himſelf. The uſeful deſigns which a man forms he is commonly diſpoſed to attribute to his own goodneſs; and the ſucceſs of thoſe deſigns to his own wiſdom and power. So did not Nehemiah. When he ſpeaks of his purpoſe of rebuilding the Holy City, he terms his intention, *that which my God had put in my heart to do at Jeruſalem* (*p*). When he exhorted the rulers of the Jews to join in the undertaking; *I told them, of the hand of my God, which was good upon me* (*q*). When he aſſembled the nobles and the people to ſettle them in the city according to their genealogies, his language is; *My God put it into mine heart* (*r*). In every emergency we have ſeen him directing his prayers to God for guidance and ſupport. It ought both to be admitted, and unequivocally to be ſtated, that ſome few of his expreſſions, if taken by themſelves, might be miſunderſtood; and might ſeem to favour a haſty ſuppoſition that he indulged a degree of pride in the recollection of his labours, and looked upon himſelf not merely as a

(*p*) Nehem. ii. 12. (*q*) Nehem. ii. 18.
(*r*) Nehem. vii. 5.

benefactor

benefactor to his countrymen, but as not wholly without a title to reward *as of debt* from above, on the ground of positive merit before God. Thus, after mentioning some of his right proceedings, he, on one occasion, says; *Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people* (*s*). On another: *Remember me, O my God, for good* (*t*). On another: *Remember me, O my God, concerning this; and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof* (*u*). If, however, after the survey which we have taken of his character; after all the testimonies which have been produced of his constant, humble, and exclusive dependence on God, both for the will and for the power to do things pleasing in His sight, we can imagine that these petitions were uttered in a self-righteous spirit: let us attend to another petition offered up by him after the mention of his exertions for enforcing the sacred observance of the Sabbath; a petition which sufficiently explains his meaning in all the rest: *Remember me, O my God, concerning this also: and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy* (*w*). Here we find the true ser-

(*s*) Nehem. v. 19. (*t*) Nehem. xiii. 31.
(*u*) Nehem. xiii. 14. (*w*) Nehem, xiii. 22.

vant

vant of the Moſt High leaving no place for ſelf-righteouſneſs, no pretence for a claim of merit before God. We find him, while he pleads his faithful endeavours to glorify his Heavenly Maſter, and to promote the welfare of his beloved country, in humble aſſurance of the reward which free grace had promiſed to beſtow, confeſſing that they could not ſtand the ſearching purity of the divine law; and that it is only on the infinite mercy of his God that he reſts his hopes of being ſpared and accepted.

Have you, who now hear me, the conſolation of having been purified, like Nehemiah, from ſelf-righteouſneſs? If you have done good deeds for your native land; have you imagined that you have performed them by ſtrength of your own? In diſcharging its truſts, in fighting its battles, in executing or in framing its laws, have you, like Nehemiah, *in all things by prayer and ſupplication with thankſgiving made your requeſts known unto God* (*x*); and conſtantly ſought ſtrength from Him; and given the glory to Him; and aſcribed all that has been praiſeworthy in your purpoſes, and in your conduct, *to the good hand of your God upon you*, to the energetic grace of that Holy Spirit which

(*x*) Philipp. iv. 6.

worketh

worketh in every man both *to will and to do?* If *through Chriſt, who ſtrengtheneth you* by his Spirit, you can *do all things* (*y*) to which you are called in your country's ſervice; without Him you can do nothing. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Him* (*z*). Conſider, farther, what you have thought of the nature of your patriotic actions? Have you conceived that the moſt eminent of them were perfect? Have you conceived that any one of them has come up in the motive, in the execution, in every preceding, accompanying, and conſequent circumſtance, to the meaſure of your duty, according to the ſtandard of the perfect law of your God? Have you imagined that any one of them taken ſingly, or that all of them added together, could claim reward from God *as of debt* due from Him to poſitive merit? How remote then has been your ſpirit and your judgement from the ſpirit and the judgement of Nehemiah! How different your ſpirit and your judgement from the pattern ſet before you in the Scriptures! If through the grace of God you have been inſtructed to *think* of your own actions *no more highly than you ought, but to think ſoberly* concern-

(*y*) Philipp. iv. 13. (*z*) John, xv. 4, 5.

ing

ing them (*a*); you will place no confidence in any of them. You will perceive all of them to be defective, ſtained with an admixture of ſinfulneſs. You will pray that they may be accepted through the atoning merits of Chriſt; and that you may be *ſpared according to the greatneſs of His mercy.*

In terminating the examination of the public character of this righteous man, let me warn you by a caution which the text furniſhes, not to deceive yourſelves when you call your exertions for your countrymen to remembrance. Separate not your actions from your motives. The deeds of Nehemiah, however right in themſelves, would not have been acceptable to God, if they had not been performed *becauſe of the fear of God.* That motive ſanctified them, exalted them into acts of ſervice to God, proofs of love to Him, evidences of a deſire to live unto Him. If they had not been acts of ſervice to Him, proofs of love to Him, evidences of a deſire to live to Him; why ſhould it have been hoped that He would accept them? They would not have been performed from the motive which He requires, in the ſpirit which He approves, for the purpoſe which He commands. How

(*a*) Rom. xii. 3.

then

then could they have been pleaſing to Him? If you have diſtinguiſhed yourſelf by actions which in themſelves were right, but not performed *becauſe of the fear of God*; you cannot reaſonably hope that the deeds were accepted by Him. Bring your ruling motive to the proof. You have ſhewn yourſelf an obedient ſubject. You have laboured uſefully as a magiſtrate; or you have been a champion of the religious inſtitutions of your country; or you have aſſerted her liberties; or you have borne an active part in her councils; or you have triumphed in her armies; or you have led her navies to victory. Yet your ruling motive may have been intereſt, ambition, fame. The ſelfiſh man, and the aſpiring man, and the man who thirſts for human applauſe, are not ſeldom employed as inſtruments of ſignal benefit to their country, by Him who worketh His own purpoſes according to His will, and cauſeth the evil paſſions of men to advance His plans of univerſal good. Such men too He not ſeldom indulges, rather let us ſay ſuch men He chaſtiſes, by permitting them to attain their perſonal object. They advance their private intereſt; they extend their reputation; they gratify their ambition; they win the attachment

ment of their country; they obtain the praiſes of their ſovereign; they raiſe themſelves to affluence and dignity. But where has been the ſervice of God? *Verily they have no reward from their Father who is in heaven.* Their deeds were not done for His ſake. Had the ruling motive been *the fear of God*, every act of ſervice to their country would have became a work of religious obedience to Him; a chriſtian deed, a deed of real patriotiſm. The true patriot is he who is the ſervant of Chriſt.

To the warning let there be added the encouragement, which the hiſtory of Nehemiah conveys. How numerous, how various, how great, were his difficulties! Removed from the preſence of Artaxerxes to the extremity of the empire; expoſed to all the neglects, and croſſes, and diſappointments, which changes in the court of Perſia might produce; ſurrounded at Jeruſalem by timid aſſiſtants, falſe friends, active, powerful, and inveterate enemies; oppoſed within and without, in every part and period of his undertaking; how could he hope to accompliſh it? He hoped to accompliſh it, becauſe he acted in the fear of God, and therefore was authoriſed to truſt in God. His difficulties met him in the path of duty; therefore

fore he had confidence that the arm of the Lord would ſuſtain him under them, and conduct him through them. His hopes were not vain. The arm of the Lord was with him, and delivered him, and upheld him. He ſaw the fruit of his labours, the reſtoration of the city of Jeruſalem, the eſtabliſhment of his countrymen in tranquillity, in ſecurity, on the ancient mountains of Iſrael. Are you labouring in your country's cauſe, and entangled in difficulties? Continue in the path of duty; act in the fear of God; and be not diſmayed. Your God ſhall fight for you. His hand ſhall be upon you for good. *Jeſus Chriſt, the ſame yeſterday, and to day, and for ever* (*b*); the ſame in truth, in mercy, and in power, ſhall be your ſupport. The patriotiſm which He inſpires He will proſper: will proſper, you may humbly hope, to your country, will aſſuredly proſper to yourſelf. Ten righteous inhabitants had once preſerved a city mature for deſtruction. Be a chriſtian patriot; and you may hereafter know that you were one of a religious band, for whoſe ſake your country was ſpared. Be a chriſtian patriot; and though the world ſhould be more and more ſhattered by convulſions; though it ſhould be

(*b*) Hebr. xiii. 8.

the will of God that your beloved country ſhould fall; though you ſhould not be *taken away beforehand from the evil to come* (*c*); you *ſhall enter into peace*; you ſhall be found of the Lord in peace at the Great Day.

(*c*) Iſaiah, lvii. 1, 2.

SER-

SERMON XVI.

On QUIET DILIGENCE in our PROPER CONCERNS.

1 THESS. iv. 11.

Study to be quiet, and to do your own buſineſs.

TO ſinful creatures idleneſs is a continual ſnare. The man who is unemployed is prepared for wickedneſs, Temptations find him at leiſure to liſten to their voice, ready to gaze upon their ſpeciouſneſs, prompt to ſtart forward at their ſignal. Not being occupied in working for his heavenly Maſter, he is eaſily drawn into the ſervice of the Devil. It is therefore among the inſtances of the provident mercy of God, that He has appointed to every one of us an active ſtation in His houſehold: that to every one of us He ſays day by day; *Son, go, work today in My vineyard* (*a*): that after having entruſted each of us with talents capable of

(*a*) Matth. xxi. 28.

being adminiſtered to His glory, He has added this charge, *Occupy, till I come* (*b*).

Study to be quiet, and to do your own buſineſs. By this injunction the Apoſtle calls our attention to the command of God, that we ſhould be *not ſlothful in buſineſs*, that we ſhould be diligent in the diſcharge of the occupations reſting upon us; and at the ſame time brings before us a circumſtance which, on many occaſions, betrays men into neglect of their proper buſineſs, and on many becomes the more prevalent in conſequence of that neglect; namely, the very culpable practice of buſying ourſelves in the concerns of others. Theſe two connected branches of duty, diligence in our proper concerns, and forbearance from intermeddling in affairs which do not belong to us, will neceſſarily be conſidered together while we examine the inſtruction conveyed in the text.

I. In the firſt place, what does the direction, here delivered to us from the Holy Ghoſt by the mouth of St. Paul, require? One thing which it requires is, that we be *quiet*. In the language of Scripture, quietneſs deſcribes one of the moſt attractive *ornaments* (*c*) of the Chriſtian character, a

(*b*) Luke, xix. 13. (*c*) 1 Pet. iii. 4.

temper

temper of mind meek, gentle, humble, *in the ſight of God of great price*; a temper the oppoſite to a reſtleſs ſpirit of curioſity, to a buſtling love of interference, to a propenſity to thruſt ourſelves forward through vanity or pride into the tranſactions of our acquaintance, to a habit of commenting and ſitting in judgement on the proceedings of the neighbourhood. Is it without reaſon that we are admoniſhed againſt theſe ſins? Recollect how abundantly they prevail. An inquiſitive deſire of prying into ſecrets, a wiſh to raiſe ourſelves into conſequence by becoming maſters of the affairs of others, a preſumptuous eagerneſs to diſplay our capacity for management, our addreſs, our diſcernment; theſe and other unchriſtian inclinations are continually tempting us into tranſgreſſion of the Divine command, to be *quiet*. Of ſome perſons it is not too much to affirm, that a very large proportion of their time is occupied in tranſgreſſing that command. To the tranſgreſſion of it they owe the ordinary ſubjects of their converſation, and devote much of their activity. From the tranſgreſſion of it they ſeek entertainment to themſelves, and the power of furniſhing entertainment in ſociety. And

these is not one of us who is not in ſome meaſure guilty of the ſame offence.

Another duty, to the performance of which the Apoſtle calls us is, *to do our own buſineſs*. Numbers neglect their own concerns through idleneſs. They paſs their years in ſloth. They ſlumber and dream through life. The day is to them ſcarcely more a ſeaſon of working than the night. They will not rouſe their faculties, either of the body or of the mind, to exertion. They are ſoldiers who ſleep on their poſt, ſervants who hide their talent in a napkin. Others, who are by no means of a lazy diſpoſition, are often very inattentive to their proper buſineſs. They employ themſelves in purſuits which have no relation to it; or, at leaſt, which poſſeſs only a very ſlight connection with it. In theſe purſuits they will be very eager and induſtrious. But they are toiling in the chace of an object, which to them is unattainable or uſeleſs. Their eagerneſs exhauſts itſelf in working a mine, the ore of which is in their hands unproductive. Their induſtry is waſted in cultivating a field, from which they are not deſigned to reap a harveſt. Others apprehend that a much ſmaller ſhare of attention than it

 eſſential

eſſential to the due management of their concerns will be ſufficient. The degree of attention which they ſuppoſe to be needful they mean to give, and perhaps do give. But as it is not ample enough to anſwer the purpoſe, they are not found in the event to do their own buſineſs. It often happens too, that, becauſe they do not ſeriouſly turn their minds to the ſubject, they are little aware of the number or the extent of the duties which their ſtation in life, or their domeſtic condition, or the tenor of paſſing events, impoſes upon them. The obligations which they imperfectly diſcern, of courſe they imperfectly diſcharge. Others, again, acknowledge the obligation of attentive regard to their own concerns, and propoſe to conduct themſelves conſiſtently with their conviction upon the ſubject. They intend, but they do not perform. The circumſtance which undermines their right reſolutions, and prevents the execution of them, is procraſtination. An irkſome employment is deferred. "It will be ſoon "enough to-morrow." To-morrow arrives with its own plea for indulgence, with its own excuſe from trouble. Another ſucceeds, and another, with a ſimilar plea, with a ſimilar excuſe. The caſe at length be-

comes very urgent. Something muſt be done. The man partly rouſes himſelf. Something is done: but much is left undone. Even that which is done is often done imperfectly. Needful documents are loſt. Particulars have faded from the memory. The eligible ſeaſon of performance has paſſed by. The maſs of arrears is in the mean time ſwelled by new accumulations. Procraſtination begins its circle again. Another claſs of men, recogniſing the duty, devolves the diſcharge of it upon ſubordinate inſtrumentality. They conſign every thing to aſſiſtants, and deputies, and agents. If their buſineſs be done, it is not in any reaſonable meaſure done by themſelves, by means of ſuperintending prudence and co-operating exertion on their own part. It is done, or is not done, as the perſons whom they happen to have ſelected for the charge of it prove to be competent or incompetent, faithful or unfaithful. And is it generally to be expected that a concern of our own, which we neglect, others, leſs intereſted in it, will adminiſter with uniform and active care? Other deſcriptions of perſons, who greatly fail as to the duty which we are now conſidering, might be ſpecified. But if you reflect on the collective amount of the indi-

viduals

viduals belonging to the various claſſes which have been noticed; you will perceive the importance of the apoſtle's exhortation, to do your own buſineſs. Look back on your own conduct and you will diſcern that the exhortation, if at preſent it be not abſolutely needful to you, might, in many inſtances, have been addreſſed to you with reaſon and with advantage.

Farther: the text requires you to obſerve the connection which the two duties of *being quiet* and of *doing your own buſineſs* have with each other; and the importance of uniting together the performance of both. They who are not *quiet*, in other words, they who are curious, buſtling, meddling, criticiſing, are naturally impelled by theſe very circumſtances in their characters to be negligent in their own concerns. And it is equally to be apprehended, and equally evident from experience, that they, who do not occupy themſelves in the proper duties of their ſituations and callings, will be generally enſnared by the abſence of right employment into a prying interference with the conduct and affairs of other people. Would you be preſerved from either of the ſins? Guard againſt the other alſo. Would you be faithful in either of the duties? Be attentive to both. It is not merely in the

verſe on which we are meditating; that the apoſtle enforces in conjunction the duties of quietneſs and of diligence in our occupations, and eſtabliſhes the connection between them. Liſten to him in his ſubſequent epiſtle to the Theſſalonians. *We hear that there are ſome which walk among you diſorderly, working not at all, but are buſy-bodies. Now them that are ſuch we command and exhort by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that with quietneſs they work, and eat their own bread* (*d*), bread earned by their own induſtry. Obſerve that theſe perſons who do not work are alſo buſy-bodies; and that the command and exhortation to quietneſs are accompanied with a command and exhortation to labour. Obſerve alſo, in conſulting the words of Scripture which precede, and thoſe which follow, the paſſage recently quoted, the anxious earneſtneſs of the apoſtle on the points before us. How is the paſſage introduced? By a reference to a ſtrict injunction, which Saint Paul had perſonally delivered when he was at Theſſalonica: *Even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither ſhould he eat.* What injunction does he now ſubjoin to the paſſage? *Brethren, be not weary in well-doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epiſtle; note that man, and have*

(*d*) 2 Theſſ. iii. 11, 12.

no

no company with him, that he may be aſhamed. Again alſo, in an epiſtle to Timothy, Saint Paul illuſtrates by an additional example the habitual union between neglect of quietneſs and diſregard of our buſineſs: *They learn to be idle, wandering about from houſe to houſe; and not only idle, but tattlers alſo and buſy-bodies, ſpeaking things which they ought not* (*e*).

Reflect farther, that the apoſtle calls upon you, to *ſtudy* to be quiet and to do your own buſineſs. He knew the reluctance to be overcome in the heart of men before they will be induced to exert themſelves in earneſt to pleaſe God by keeping his commandments. He knew the powerful temptations which ariſe to draw men from each of the duties enjoined in the text; and that temptations to diſregard either of the duties, prepare if ſucceſsful the way for the diſregard of the other. *Study* therefore, ſaith he, to obey theſe ſacred directions. *Strive*, ſaid our Lord, to enter in at the ſtrait gate: for verily I ſay unto you, many ſhall ſeek to enter in and ſhall not be able. Strive alſo, we may conſider his apoſtle as ſaying to us, ſtrive to be quiet; ſtrive to do your own buſineſs. Without watchfulneſs and ſolicitude and exertion to be found

(*e*) 1 Tim. v. 13.

faithful

faithful in obeying theſe commands, you will aſſuredly prove guilty of tranſgreſſing them. Does quietneſs demand the ſacrifice of vanity, of pride, of curioſity, of cenſoriouſneſs, of perſonal gratification, of the means of gratifying your aſſociates? Does attention to your own buſineſs exact the ſurrender of eaſe, of amuſement, of inclination? Are the buſy-body and the negligent ever at hand to entice you by example? And do you hope that without *ſtudying* to walk in the path of duty, you ſhall not ſwerve from it?

II. In common with the directions delivered in other paſſages of Scripture, the doctrines of the text are frequently miſunderſtood or perverted. Two examples of the manner in which they are miſapplied require to be noticed.

There are many perſons who, from a principle of ſelfiſhneſs, fix their attention entirely on their own concerns. They live, ſo far as it is poſſible, as though there were no people in the world beſides themſelves and their families: no people, at leaſt, for whom they are obliged to cheriſh a friendly ſolicitude; no perſons for whoſe ſakes they are bound to ſtep forward in order to furniſh aſſiſtance or advice, and to exerciſe offices of active kindneſs. They profeſs, according

cording to their own language, to keep themſelves to themſelves: to mind their own affairs, and to leave every other perſon to mind his own and to manage them as he thinks fit. And when an occaſion ariſes which calls upon them to juſtify this ſullen and unchriſtian ſpirit; they will inform you that the Scriptures teach them to be quiet, and to do their own buſineſs. Any paſſage in the word of God which forbids us to indulge a curious, buſy, and conceited temper by an unwarrantable interference in the affairs of another, they interpret or apply as though it forbade us to benefit our neighbour by our counſel and help when deſirable to him, when neceſſary to him, when abſolutely due to him; when to withhold them would be to tranſgreſs the great commandment of loving him as ourſelves. In oppoſition to ſuch ſelfiſhneſs, in contradiction to ſuch an abuſe of Scripture, how ſpeaks St. Paul himſelf? *Look not every man on his own things; but every man alſo on the things of others.* Conſult your neighbour's intereſt at all times as well as your own. Be ready, be active, to contribute in every becoming way to his welfare and to his comfort. Be prompt, according to the law of chriſtian good will, to give up time, to take trouble,

trouble, to reſign advantages, for his ſake. Act towards him in points of kindneſs no leſs than of juſtice as you would wiſh him to act towards you. Conſider him as a brother. Labour for him; and, if need be, ſuffer for him. *Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus* (*f*). Regard your neighbour as a brother of your Lord.

Again; we find many perſons wrapped up in worldly mindedneſs, and living as if there were nothing deſirable in the life to come; nay rather, as if there were no life to come. Their thoughts are occupied in plans for gaining money, or for obtaining ſome other worldly object: and their exertions are devoted to the accompliſhment of theſe plans. They are of the earth, earthy: and they concern themſelves little as to the favour of the Lord from heaven. The ſtudy of the Scriptures is diſregarded. The mere attendance on the public worſhip of God requires more time than they are willing to beſtow. Private prayer itſelf is perhaps altogether laid aſide, or very irregularly and haſtily performed. If you preſs ſuch perſons with the importance of religion; they will anſwer, that they are as religious as it is in their power to be; that they have affairs to manage, and fami-

(*f*) Philipp. ii. 4, 5.

lies,

lies to ſupport: that their rule is, to be quiet, and to do their own buſineſs: and they will often give you to underſtand, by words or by looks, that they wiſh that you would occupy yourſelf in your own buſineſs, and permit them to be quiet in theirs. The God of this world has blinded them. How ſpeaks the Scripture? *Seek ye firſt the kingdom of God, and His righteouſneſs. What ſhall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?* Be not deceived. *Ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon. Where your treaſure is, there will your heart be alſo.* If the treaſure which you are chiefly employed in purſuing, be it what it may, is a treaſure on earth; your heart is fixed on the earth. Your affections are not ſet on things above, but on things of the earth. You are of the world: you love the world. And *they that love the world ſhall periſh with the world.*

III. Let me place before you ſome of the happy conſequences, which may be anticipated from a faithful obſervance of the command, *Study to be quiet, and to do your own buſineſs.*

In the firſt place, you will poſſeſs that inward ſatisfaction, which accompanies the perform-

performance of duty. Obedience to the will of God in any point is a ſtep towards tranquillity of conſcience. And if that obedience be ſincere, that is to ſay, if it be attended with a real deſire and with watchful endeavours to obey *all* His commandments; it will in general be followed by immediate tranquillity of conſcience. It will lead to larger meaſures of comfort and joy in the Holy Ghoſt; of that peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding.

In the next place, your own concerns, both ſpiritual and temporal, will proſper the better. Your attention not being drawn aſide and diſtracted by circumſtances which concern you not; you will feel yourſelf able without difficulty to attach your mind to things of importance; to labour for the ſalvation of your ſoul, and to conduct your worldly affairs with prudent conſideration and active diligence. Opportunities, formerly waſted, and worſe than waſted, in examining and cenſuring and making public the proceedings of your acquaintances and neighbours, are now likely to be employed, ſometimes in lawful induſtry, ſometimes in mental acquiſitions, ſometimes in the more direct cultivation of the fruits of faith, the graces of the chriſtian character. Your

common

common habits of life will be improved. Inſtead of being a tattler and a buſy-body, wandering from houſe to houſe and ſpeaking thoſe things which you ought not to ſpeak; you will become *a keeper at home* (g). You will perceive that a habit of rambling excludes regular employment, unſettles the mind, interrupts plans of uſefulneſs, leads into temptation. You will acquire an increaſing reliſh for the calm delights of domeſtic life. You will feel that home is the ſphere of comfort and of duty.

Again, you will be preſerved from cauſing the injury to ſociety which is commonly occaſioned by thoſe perſons, who pry and intrude into the affairs of other men. A meddling adviſer may mean well: but he is a miſchievous neighbour. His advice, being in a large majority of caſes either ill-timed, or grounded upon an imperfect knowledge of circumſtances, will moſt frequently be wrong. If in ſome inſtances his counſel has been followed with advantage, in more it will have been detrimental. There are perſons who, while they admit the miſchiefs produced by the generality of buſy adviſers, ſeem to think themſelves gifted with ſuch extraordinary diſcernment, ſo particularly qua-

(g) Tit. ii. 5.

lified to direct others aright, as to be entitled and even bound to ſtep out of the common courſe and be forward with their remarks and admonitions continually. He who imagines himſelf ſingularly qualified for the office of an adviſer, is marked out by that diſplay of preſumption as a man whoſe judgement ought to be ſuſpected. *Be not wiſe in your own conceits. Seeſt thou a man wiſe in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him. Let no man deceive himſelf: if any among you ſeemeth to be wiſe in this world, let him become a fool*, let him become deeply ſenſible of his own want of wiſdom, *that he may be wiſe* (*b*), in the wiſdom which is of God.

Farther, you will have the proſpect of paſſing through life with a leſs ſhare of diſturbance, diſlike, and oppoſition, than otherwiſe you would experience, and with larger facilities of uſefulneſs than you would otherwiſe enjoy. It ſcarcely ever happens that a meddler is beloved or truſted. Obſervation of the miſchiefs which he occaſions, apprehenſion of his curioſity and interference, and ſuſpicion that his own affairs are probably neglected, and that he is in conſequence a perſon with whom it may be dangerous to have much connection, cauſe him to be diſliked and ſhunned. Quietneſs united with

(*b*) Rom. xii. 16. Prov. xxvi. 12. 1 Cor. iii. 18.

induſtry

induſtry is in fact ſo attractive, that a character marked by thoſe qualities frequently obtains higher approbation and warmer eſteem than it deſerves: and ſometimes without any other commendable feature is regarded, and regards itſelf, as religious. But though no perſon is religious, who does not make it his leading ſtudy to pleaſe God in all things through the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; though no quality is acceptable in the ſight of God, no quality is really good, except ſo far as it is cultivated from a deſire to pleaſe God: yet the very circumſtance of the general, and frequently too great praiſe beſtowed by the world on the quiet and induſtrious man, and beſtowed without reference to his motives for quietneſs and induſtry, ſhews him to be likely to paſs through the world with much leſs moleſtation than men of a different turn of mind. He does not officiouſly force himſelf into the affairs of others: therefore he eſcapes their notice, or at leaſt is not obnoxious to them. He does not wilfully ſtand in their way; therefore they trouble him not. He is inured to active employment: therefore he is deemed eſtimable as capable of befriending them He conducts his private buſineſs with attention: therefore he is reſpected as entitled to

confidence. The union of the two qualities effaces or mitigates any unfavourable impreſſion, which either of them ſingly might produce. The jealouſies which induſtry might excite are conciliated by quietneſs: the inactivity of which quietneſs might be accuſed is diſproved by induſtry. When theſe qualities, combined together, are manifeſtly founded on chriſtian principle; they co-operate with reciprocally augmented efficacy to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*, and to win to religion ſome portion of eſteem even from irreligious men. If you are quiet and induſtrious from Chriſtian motives; you may humbly hope that the natural tendency of ſuch conduct to obtain for you a peaceable paſſage through your earthly pilgrimage will be accompanied with the bleſſing of God, and rendered effectual. You may humbly hope to be honoured with many opportunities of being inſtrumental to the welfare of men, and of advancing the glory of your Redeemer.

Laſtly; if you ſtedfaſtly ſtrive to obey the command recorded in the text, you will be the leſs ſolicitous as to the opinions and obſervations of others concerning yourſelf and your proceedings. Thoſe perſons who are the moſt forward to remark on the actions

of their neighbours are, generally, the moſt alive to the ſentiments and ſpeeches of the neighbourhood concerning themſelves. And it may be conſidered as a truth eſtabliſhed by experience, that perſons who in common occurrences are very anxious as to the judgement which the world may pronounce on their conduct, will be found in heart devoted, in practice confirmed, to the world. If you perceive deciſive indications of this anxiouſneſs in the language and deportment of a particular individual; be prepared to expect in that individual, ſometimes inſtances of departure from Chriſtian moderation, ſometimes compliance with enſnaring cuſtoms; ſometimes an eager deſire to imitate fooliſh, extravagant, or otherwiſe objectionable proceedings in the domeſtic habits of families in the vicinity. See that you be not that individual. In proportion as attention to be quiet and to do your own buſineſs contributes to guard you againſt this anxious apprehenſion, this ſudden and lively feeling, of the animadverſions and the ſneers of the worldly-minded; it guards you againſt conformity to the world, againſt becoming enſlaved to a worldly ſpirit.

In our endeavours, my brethren, conſcientiouſly to diſcharge, in dependence on the

divine grace, the obligations which have now been inveſtigated; let us look to our univerſal pattern, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Though the office which he came as man to execute was of the moſt public nature; though it conſtrained him to move continually from village to village, from city to city; though in towns it enveloped him in overwhelming crowds, and even in deſerts ſurrounded him with multitudes: how eminently was he diſtinguiſhed by quietneſs in every branch of his duty! *He did not cry, nor ſtrive, nor cauſe his voice to be heard in the ſtreet* (*i*). How eminent alſo was his diligence in his proper work! He *went about doing good, and healing all that were oppreſſed of the Devil.* He was conſtantly *about His Father's buſineſs.* It was *his meat to do the will of His Father that ſent Him, and to finiſh His Father's work* (*j*). In all things *He has given us an example, that we ſhould do as He has done* (*k*). Would we follow his commandments? Let us walk in his ſteps. Would we reign with Him hereafter? Let us be conformed to His image here.

(*i*) Iſa. xlii. 2. (*j*) Acts, x. 38. Luke, ii. 49. John, iv. 34. (*k*) John, xiii. 15.

SER-

SERMON XVII.

On PARTIALITY.

ACTS, vi. 1.

And in thoſe Days, when the Number of the Diſciples was multiplied, there aroſe a Murmuring of the Grecians againſt the Hebrews, becauſe their Widows were neglected in the daily Miniſtration.

A *NEW commandment I give unto you*, ſaid our Lord to the apoſtles on the evening before His death, *that ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye alſo love one another. By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if ye have love one to another* (*a*). Obedience to this commandment became an immediate and a diſtinguiſhing mark of the early Chriſtians. Their fervent love for each other raiſed the aſtoniſhment and the admiration of the heathen among whom they dwelt: and contributed to win the hearts of unbelievers to the religion of Chriſt. One way in which this love ſhewed itſelf was bountiful kind-

(*a*) John, xiii. 34, 35.

neſs to the diſtreſſed. No ſooner had the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecoſt been the means of converting three thouſand ſouls, than we learn that *all that believed were together, and had all things common: and the* richer among them *ſold their poſſeſſions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need* (*b*). Some time afterwards, when the number of Chriſtians at Jeruſalem was much enlarged, *the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one ſoul: neither ſaid any of them that aught of the things which he poſſeſſed was his own; but they had all things common. And great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were poſſeſſors of lands, or houſes, ſold them, and brought the prices of the things that were ſold, and laid them down at the Apoſtle's feet; and diſtribution was made unto every man according as he had need* (*c*). Wrong practices, however, or wrong feelings, reſulting from that corruption of human nature which, even when brought under ſubjection by divine grace, is always ſtriving to recover its dominion over the heart, ſpeedily began to take place with reſpect to the diſtribution of this charitable fund. *There aroſe a murmuring of the Grecians againſt the Hebrews, becauſe*

(*b*) Acts, ii. 44, 45. (*c*) Acts, iv. 32—34.

their

their widows were neglected in the daily miniſtration. Theſe Grecians were Jews from foreign countries, who had come to Jeruſalem, and had there been converted to Chriſtianity. The Hebrews were native Jews reſident in Judæa, who had alſo embraced the Goſpel. As the principal part of the fund from which daily ſupport was furniſhed to the poor had probably been contributed by the Hebrews; it is alſo probable that the management and diſpoſal of it might be left principally in their hands. The Grecians either perceived, or imagined, that the widows belonging to their body were not relieved equally with the widows of the Hebrews. They complained to the apoſtles; and requeſted them to remedy the evil. The apoſtles called together the whole aſſembly of Chriſtians. And having publickly declared in the firſt place, that it would be entirely unreaſonable and fruitleſs to expect that they themſelves, to whom Chriſt had committed the office of preaching the goſpel, ſhould leave their ſpecial function of prayer and of the miniſtry of the word in order to ſuperintend the diſtribution of proviſions: they deſired the multitude to look out from among themſelves ſeven men of honeſt report, and full of the Holy Ghoſt

and of wiſdom, who might be ſolemnly appointed to have the charge of that buſineſs. This equitable and judicious propoſal gave univerſal ſatisfaction. Seven men were immediately choſen, and ſet before the apoſtles; who when they had recommended theſe Deacons, for ſo they were termed, to God by prayer, laid their hands upon them. From the names of the Deacons there is ground for concluding, that moſt of them were ſelected from among the Grecians. The evil was thus nipped in the bud. And there is no trace in the Scriptures of any future diſcontent having ever ariſen on the ſubject.

There are two prominent violations of Chriſtian Morality, which this tranſaction may properly introduce to our conſideration; Partiality, and Suſpicion. It is my purpoſe, under the permiſſion of God, to inveſtigate them in two ſucceſſive diſcourſes.

Partiality is the ſin, againſt the indulgence of which we are now to ſeek inſtruction.

If the larger proportion of the charitable fund was contributed by the Hebrews; partiality to perſons of their own kindred or country would be likely to perſuade them, that the Hebrew widows were entitled to receive

receive more than the Grecian widows. Yet it became them to reflect that they had been contributing not to a private collection for the benefit of their own friends, or for people belonging to the body of Hebrews in particular: but to a general fund, raiſed from love to Chriſt; and for the ſuccour, in ſuch proportions as need ſhould require, of his diſtreſſed ſervants, whoever they might be. This reaſoning we may well ſuppoſe that the Hebrews would immediately have advanced had the caſe been reverſed; had the larger part of the ſum been furniſhed by the Grecians, and the Grecian widows had on that account been preferred to the Hebrews. Why did they not reaſon thus, if they did not thus reaſon, as the caſe ſtood? Becauſe they were under the influence of partiality. Partiality, be it remembered, is the giving of undue preferences. We are all liable, we are all diſpoſed, to be partial. We are partial to ourſelves, partial to our families, partial to our connections, partial to our friends. We deem ourſelves, our families, our connections, our friends, entitled to attentions, to privileges, to favors, beyond others. We are offended if diſtinctions are not made for our own benefit; if allowances ampler than thoſe which are uſually granted

are

are not admitted on our behalf. Proceedings, which towards moſt individuals in our ſituation we ſhould have acknowledged as highly proper, and ſhould ourſelves have been among the foremoſt to adopt, we reſent when held towards us. We fancy that we diſcern various reaſons, which gave us a claim to different treatment: and aſcribe it to ſtupidity, to prejudice, to illiberality, to enmity, that other perſons did not diſcern them, or did not act upon them. Advantages obtained by others we regard as better deſerved by ourſelves; and we envy and diſlike thoſe who have acquired poſſeſſion of them. The ſame prejudices, the ſame groundleſs conſtructions, the ſame unreaſonable expectations, we extend to the caſe of any other perſon towards whom we are partial. Theſe are among the ordinary forms, under which partiality diſplays itſelf.

Hitherto our partiality to ourſelves and to perſons connected with us has been contemplated chiefly as it influences our judgement and our feelings reſpecting the conduct of others towards us. The ſame principle however is no leſs powerful in determining our own ſentiments and proceedings towards other men. *Are ye not partial?* ſaid St. James to the Chriſtians of his day, when, on

on the entrance of a man of wealth and conſequence into their aſſemblies for religious worſhip, they were officiouſly active to place him in a commodious ſeat: while to a poor man they would ſay, *Stand thou there*; *or*, *ſit here under my footſtool* (*d*). Whence was it that they were thus partial? Becauſe pride led them to value riches and power too highly: or becauſe ſelfiſhneſs whiſpered that by paying court to the rich and the powerful they might gain ſome advantage for themſelves. Let us beware, under the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, of being partial in our conduct, *of having men's perſons in admiration becauſe of advantage* (*e*), when our reputation or our intereſt ſeems to be concerned. If we have tranſactions with two different perſons, one of whom in conſequence of the authority or the property which he poſſeſſes, or of ſome other external circumſtance, appears likely to be able, ſhould he be ſo diſpoſed, to raiſe us in the eſtimation of the world, or to render us an important ſervice, while the other has not any ſuch ability: we muſt be ſtedfaſtly and conſcientiouſly upon our guard, or we ſhall ſhew ſome unwarrantable preference to the former. Even if the caſe be evidently ſuch,

(*d*) James, ii. 1—4. (*e*) Jude, 16.

that

that open preference is due from us to the perſon who cannot reflect credit upon us, or befriend us: we ſhall commonly find ourſelves barely willing in practice to deal to him equal juſtice, and poſitively unwilling to ſhew towards him as large a meaſure of kindneſs, as towards the man by whom we hope to profit whether in the article of eſtimation, or of emolument, or of any other real or ſuppoſed advantage.

It is apparent then that whether our partiality employ itſelf in judging of the proceedings of our neighbours towards us, or in influencing our views and actions towards him, it numbers among its principal ſources, ſelfiſhneſs and pride.

It has alſo been evinced that affection and perſonal favor frequently cauſe us to be partial. We are not required to perſuade ourſelves that affection and perſonal favor, if reſting on ſome ſufficient foundation, do not juſtify us when we ſhew a preference to one perſon over another in the diſcretionary exerciſe of benevolence. But in the very office of conferring kindneſs they muſt be habitually regulated under the control of conſcience, leſt they ſhould produce unreaſonable acts and degrees of preference. And in no caſe will they juſtify a failure

a failure in equity: nor in that meaſure of kindneſs which is at all times due to every man; nor in that meaſure to which in any given caſe the particular individual is entitled.

Nearly ſimilar to affection in its operation as a ſource of partiality is gratitude. In ordinary circumſtances gratitude cauſes affection. Its operation however as to partiality is diſtinct and independent. Suppoſe the caſe, and it is a poſſible caſe, that an obligation has been conferred by a character ſtained with ſuch enormities, that no ſentiment amounting to affection can be cheriſhed towards him by the perſon who has received the benefit. Yet gratitude is felt, and ought to be manifeſted: and the manifeſtation of it may become partiality. A lively perception of the favor originally beſtowed, and a ſolicitous endeavour to evince thankfulneſs, and to fulfil, when opportunities preſent themſelves, the duty of retribution, may lead the mind to overlook the ſtronger claims, and to underrate the ſuperior merits, of a third perſon, and practically to deny to him the advantage which in equity he is warranted to expect. Univerſally too, gratitude, like affection, is a magnifying and a multiplying principle. It amplifies the good qualities of the benefactor; and frequently inveſts him with merits of ſuch a nature,

nature, that the kindneſs conferred in no reſpect warrants the idea of his poſſeſſing them. Acting under ſuch impreſſions how eaſily may gratitude become practical partiality againſt the benefactor's more worthy competitor!

In the caſe which has recently been ſpecified there is an additional cauſe which may of itſelf produce Partiality: namely, the fear of not being impartial. Under that apprehenſion preſſing upon a tender conſcience, the reſult frequently is to do much leſt enough ſhould not be done. And to do too much to one man is, on many occaſions, to do too little towards another. There is alſo a different caſe, in which the cauſe under conſideration has been known to miſlead the conſcientious. When injuries have been ſuſtained, the dread of failing in the momentous duty of forgiveneſs, or even of acting in any manner which may be conceived to wear the ſemblance of lurking reſentment, may blind the judgement and terminate in partial conduct.

When the boſom is decidedly under the influence of reſentment or enmity: Partiality, not as in the preceding inſtance favoring the injurious man, but eager to thwart his comforts and obſtruct his intereſts, is a certain conſequence. Circumſtances are miſunderſtood:

ſtood: facts are perverted: truths are unwillingly admitted. The good qualities of the object of diſlike are queſtioned: his attainments depreciated: his defects aggravated. The mind, conſciouſly or unconſciouſly, is buſied in perſuading itſelf, that he is very far from being worthy of the conſideration, the kindneſs, the countenance, the preference, which impartiality at once perceives to be his due.

Haſtineſs of judgement, and ignorance ariſing from indolence and inattention, end in Partiality. Concluſions are formed without an adequate examination of premiſes, without ſufficient premiſes, perhaps without any relevant premiſes. While we may be taking credit to ourſelves for the imaginary fitneſs of our deciſion; we may have clouded the opening proſpects of a meritorious individual, or have committed a poſitive act of injuſtice.

Partiality, whether it be exerciſed in favour of a perſon or againſt him, is pernicious to him. If manifeſted in his behalf, it tends, in proportion to the magnitude of the occaſion upon which it operates, to ſtimulate his vanity; to puff him up with overweening ideas of his excellences and pretenſions; to accuſtom him to look for

ſimilar

ſimilar preference from others; and to place him in a ſtation which he is more or leſs incompetent to occupy. If it had been the purpoſe of our Lord to eſtabliſh a temporal kingdom at Jeruſalem; and if in that caſe we could ſuppoſe him to have acceded to the partial requeſt of the mother of James and John, that her two children might be ſeated, the one on his right hand and the other on his left (*f*), in the principal poſts of dignity and power: what would have been the effect but to nouriſh arrogance in the young men, and to fix them in employments which, in point of human qualifications, they would have been totally unable to diſcharge? When Partiality acts againſt a man, the injurious tendency is unequivocal. His rights are withheld or taken away. His reaſonable expectations are diſappointed. He is rouſed to reſentment, perhaps to malevolence and revenge; or is diſpirited, and ſinks into liſtleſsneſs; or is impelled into habits of ſuſpicion and craftineſs by the apprehenſion of future injuries from Partiality, and by ſolicitude to ſecure himſelf againſt them.

Miſchiefs which we have cauſed by Partiality we are bound, no leſs than in the caſe of evils which we have occaſioned by any

(*f*) Matth. xx. 20.

other miſconduct, to repair according to our reaſonable ability and opportunity. But frequently they are irreparable. Suppoſe the Hebrews to have been convinced, that a Grecian widow had been neglected in conſequence of a partial adminiſtration of the fund. Of what avail would the conviction have been, had they alſo learned that the ſufferer had died through want? If under the influence of Partiality we have depreciated the reputation of another; our warmeſt exertions may be incapable of reſtoring his good name. If we have ſtationed him in a poſt for which he is not ſufficiently qualified; to remove him is probably out of our power. If we have prevented him from attaining an advantage to which he had an equitable claim; it has been irrecoverably transferred to his neighbour.

If we were to ſearch through common life for that exemplification of Partiality, which might moſt forcibly diſcloſe the miſchief of the principle; we might find it in partiality towards children. Partiality there is not an incident, but a habit. The objects of the unreaſonable preference or of the unmerited degradation are always preſent; always at hand to experience the effects of the *evil eye*, for to them, whether unfavourable

or favourable, it is evil, with which they are regarded. Cauſeleſs preference will be the more elating, as manifeſted by thoſe to whom the party preferred is taught to look up; and as granted over thoſe who by the ties of blood are his equals. Cauſeleſs inferiority of affection, at all times eaſily conſtrued into actual diſlike, will be deemed particularly hard when manifeſted by a parent; and is ſignally calculated to *provoke children to anger*, and to cauſe them to be *diſcouraged* (*g*). The alienation of mind produced between children by parental partiality prolongs its influence into riper years, and may ſhake brotherly love through life.

The wiſdom that is from above is without partiality (*h*). What are the concomitant marks, by which this wiſdom that is without partiality is characterized? *Purity*, replies the apoſtle James, *peaceableneſs, gentleneſs, eaſineſs to be entreated, fulneſs of mercy and of good fruits, freedom from hypocriſy.* If theſe are tokens which beſpeak the abſence of Partiality; what inference may we deduce as to the ſigns, by which its preſence will be diſtinguiſhed?

I charge thee before God and the Lord Jeſus

(*g*) Col. iii. 21. (*h*) James, iii. 17.

Chriſt,

Chriſt, and the elect angels, that thou obſerve theſe things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality (*i*). If to Timothy, the eminently pious Timothy, St. Paul thought it but a neceſſary caution to addreſs this ſolemn charge; which among us is the man who ought not with humility and fear to take the warning to himſelf? Who among us does not feel himſelf admoniſhed to lay to heart the conſiderations which the Sacred Writings hold forth as inſtrumental, under the grace of God, to guard him againſt Partiality? Some of thoſe conſiderations ſhall briefly be noticed.

Reflect, in the firſt place, that with God *there is no reſpect of perſons. Without reſpect of perſons He judgeth according to every man's work. He is a great God, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not perſons* (*k*). Let the creature learn from the Creator. *Thou ſhalt not reſpect the perſon of the poor, nor honour the perſon of the mighty* (*l*). Thou ſhalt act to every man without Partiality.

Contemplate, in the next place, the example of your Lord. *By the grace of God he taſted of death for every man* (*m*). He ac-

(*i*) 1 Tim. v. 21.
(*k*) Eph. vi. 9. 1 Pet. i. 17. Deut. x. 17.
(*l*) Levit. xix. 15. (*m*) Hebr. ii. 9.

cepted the poor and the deſpiſed as his brethren. *Maſter! we know that Thou art true, and careſt for no man; for Thou regardeſt not the perſon of men, but teacheſt the way of God in truth* (*n*). One branch of the way of God which He taught and exemplified was impartiality.

Farther. Strive to reduce the influence of ſelfiſhneſs over your mind, by maintaining a ſteady warfare againſt the principle itſelf, and by reducing more and more nearly to the juſt level your conceptions of the worth of earthly objects. *The faſhion of this world paſſeth away.* If every thing to which ſelfiſhneſs can extend its graſp be once felt as uncertain, tranſient, imperfect, burthened with trouble; will you be guilty of Partiality to obtain ſuch acquiſitions? Will you endanger by the guilt of Partiality the loſs of treaſures incorruptible, eternal, full of glory?

With equal diligence, with equal ſincerity, lower the unwarranted eſtimation, which you are liable to aſſign to yourſelf. Learn of Him who *was meek and lowly in heart, to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowlineſs and meekneſs. In honour prefer one another. In lowlineſs of*

(*n*) Mark, xii. 14.

mind

mind let each eſteem others better than himſelf (*o*). If the habit of our minds be rather to undervalue ourſelves than another; to wave our claims rather than too eagerly to puſh them; to recede from our rights rather than to enforce them with pertinacity; to reflect that before God our deſert is nothing, and that from man we probably have received many preferences to which we had a very ſlender title: one of the ſtrongeſt foundations of Partiality is ſhaken.

Accuſtom yourſelf alſo to ſhun precipitation in forming your opinions. Remember that in every caſe in which your partiality can operate in favour either of yourſelf, or of thoſe whom you are diſpoſed to befriend, there is another perſon againſt whom it can operate, againſt whom, if it be indulged, it will neceſſarily operate. His intereſts therefore, not thoſe only of yourſelf or of your friends, are at ſtake. Be patient in examining, be cool in deliberating, before you adopt a concluſion, in which even inadvertence may be injurious to him, injurious perhaps to an extent which you cannot foreſee, and in conſequences which may be irretrievable. *Look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of others* (*p*).

(*o*) Matth. xi. 29. Epheſ. iv. 1, 2. Rom. xii. 10. Philipp. ii. 3. (*p*) Philipp. ii. 4.

Several of the conſiderations which have been ſuggeſted as aids againſt the influence of partiality, though to have touched upon them in detail may probably have had its advantages, might have been ſummed up in the comprehenſive command; *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour*; and therefore in the maſs of injuries which it proſcribes, baniſhes Partiality. Place yourſelf in the ſituation of your neighbour. Repreſent to yourſelf his reaſonable expectations. Excite in your own mind the emotions, which it is natural that he ſhould experience. Deliberate for him, judge for him, hope for him, feel for him. Become as it were the very man. Thus ſhall you know what it would be to him to experience partiality. Thus ſhall you receive a practical, an accurate, an experimental admonition, not to be partial.

Throughout the preſent diſcourſe Partiality, whether viewed with regard to the forms which it wears, the effects which it produces, the ſources whence it ſprings, or the remedies by which it is to be withſtood, has been contemplated in its ordinary bearings on individuals, with little reference to their ſpecial ſituations. In different claſſes, and under a diverſity of circumſtances, it will preſent itſelf under various modes and

aſpects,

aſpects, and proſecute its operations with diſſimilar advantages. There is one deſcription of individuals laid open beyond others to its influence; thoſe, namely, who for whatever purpoſe are aſſociated, whether avowedly or tacitly, into a party. I mean not to ſpeak of political parties in the legiſlature; though to them, and eſpecially to the leaders of them, the ſpirit of the obſervations to be ſubjoined, if it will apply to any man, will apply with particular pertinency. I ſpeak of petty parties in private life. Theſe, at one time, ariſe from the purſuit of a common profeſſional object; at another, from union in a commercial undertaking; at another, from concurrence in ſome religious diſtinction. Into all theſe aſſociations, blameleſs or laudable as the origin of them may be, the general evils adhering to party inſinuate themſelves. The perſons who ſtand at the head are very generally ſeen to become elated by pre-eminence. If the party be formed on a religious ground; the leader, not unuſually, grows ſupercilious, dogmatical, impatient of contradiction. But in each aſſociation, and from the higheſt even to the loweſt member of it, partiality is commonly diſcernible, often prevalent. There is a manifeſtation of a narrow-minded ſpirit

of exclusion towards persons who do not belong to the body. Towards those who do belong to it, unreasonable preferences and unmerited countenance are extended. For their several interests, as well as for the general advantage of the body, proceedings widely at variance with the rule of christian love to our neighbour are adopted and upheld. In parties constructed on a still smaller scale kindred consequences are visible. An individual becomes in his own circle, or in his own house, the head of a little knot of partisans. Into the number of these favourites, who commonly owe the distinction to an acquiescence in the opinions, a compliance with the humours, and a support of the projects, of the principal, no one who does not evince corresponding acquiescence and compliance and support, finds admission. At any rate, when refractoriness becomes evident, favour is withdrawn. On behalf of those who continue to submit Partiality is constantly exercised. Their good qualities are overcharged; their faults are vindicated; their interests are promoted at the expence of other men. Among the female sex also these minor parties are not very unfrequent. Whether subsisting among women or among men, they are highly injurious

rious to the individual who governs, and to the perſons who are held in ſubjection. They foſter on the one ſide ſelf-conceit, ungraciouſneſs of manners, irritability and impetuoſity of temper; on the other, flattery, direct or indirect, ſervile obſequiouſneſs, diſſimulation and cunning; on both ſides, Partiality. Where is the ſpirit of Chriſtian humility? Where is the ſpirit of Chriſtian ſincerity? Where is the ſpirit of Chriſtian love?

SER-

SERMON XVIII.

On Suspicion.

Acts, vi. 1.

And in thoſe Days, when the Number of the Diſciples was multiplied, there aroſe a Murmuring of the Grecians againſt the Hebrews, becauſe their Widows were neglected in the daily Miniſtration.

SUSPICION is the ſecond ſubject, to which the paſſage of Scripture now before us leads our meditations.

The Grecian Jews, feeling themſelves in ſome meaſure conſidered as foreigners at Jeruſalem, would eaſily be tempted to apprehend that their widows would not be relieved with the ſame fairneſs and liberality as thoſe of the Hebrews. And if they were alſo conſcious that the fund from which the relief came had been raiſed principally among the Hebrews, their ſuſpicions would be ſtrengthened. Yet it is very poſſible that, notwith-

notwithſtanding their ſurmiſes *, the diſtribution had been made with impartiality and propriety: or at any rate that, if the reaſonable claims of the Grecian widows had been more or leſs overlooked, the neglect had ariſen from accident, not from evil intention.

There are various ſources from which a habit of ſuſpicion may ariſe.

Some perſons are naturally of a fearful turn of mind. Open to alarm, and apprehenſive of injury or of danger, they eaſily ſuppoſe miſchief and unkindneſs to be in contemplation againſt them; and attribute malevolent intentions to others not only beyond proof, but without proof, without evidence, without probability.

Others are rendered ſuſpicious by a conſciouſneſs of weakneſs. Perceiving that plans to their detriment might be accompliſhed without difficulty, they conclude that their ſituation cannot eſcape the notice of deſigning and intereſted men, and will of itſelf invite and perſuade them to take advantage of it.

Some perſons again, overvaluing worldly objects and worldly eſtimation, and being in conſequence extremely ſolicitous to retain poſſeſſion of them, become, through theſe

* The original words, γογγυσμος ὁ παρεθεωρηθη, &c. might perhaps be rendered—"there aroſe a murmuring *that* their "widows were neglected."

circumſtances, ſuſpicious characters. They are jealous as to every thing which is purpoſed, or ſaid, or done, or which, as they imagine, may be purpoſed, or ſaid, or done, reſpecting themſelves. They watch and ſcrutinize the very looks of friends, neighbours, ſtrangers: and ſeldom allow any conſiderable portion of time to elapſe without believing that they have ample reaſon for their injurious ſurmiſes.

Others are led into ſuſpicion by Partiality. The partial man, not finding the unreaſonable preference to which he fancies himſelf and his favourites to be entitled uſually allowed, looks upon the reſt of the world with an evil eye; and regards all but his own immediate aſſociates, and frequently moſt of them likewiſe, as enviouſly combining to thwart him, to diſcredit him, to withhold from him the advantage, or the indulgence, or the diſtinction, or the countenance, or the reſpect, which is his due.

Diſappointment in not obtaining the aſſiſtance, and experiencing the friendſhip, which we had promiſed to ourſelves, tends to nouriſh ſuſpicion. Anticipating, even againſt probability, future diſappointment, we look with unreaſonable diſtruſt on the perſons from whom we imagine that it may ariſe; and learn to feel an obſcure diminu-

diminution of confidence towards all mankind.

When to diſappointment poſitive injury is ſuperadded; when from quarters whence countenance, and ſupport, and kindneſs were juſtly expected, we meet not only neglect, but injuſtice and cruelty; the temptations to ſuſpicion aſſume their moſt formidable ſhape. Who could be aſtoniſhed, if David, when Ahitophel deſerted him, when Abſalom thirſted for his blood, were harraſſed by ſome groundleſs ſuſpicions? When, in the anguiſh of his ſoul, he exclaimed; *It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; but it was thou, mine equal, my guide, mine acquaintance: yea mine own familiar friend in whom I truſted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel againſt me: behold, my ſon, which came forth of my bowels, ſeeketh my life* (*a*): when thus he exclaimed in the anguiſh of his ſoul, who could be aſtoniſhed, if, being *greatly afflicted*, he *ſaid in his haſte, All men are liars* (*b*)?

Familiarity with wickedneſs, while unhappily it is found to deaden the abhorrence of guilt, leads to ſtronger ſuſpicions of its exiſtence in every tranſaction. They whoſe

(*a*) Pſalm lv. 12, 13. xli. 9. 2 Sam. xvi. 11.
(*b*) Pſalm cxvi. 10, 11.

office

office it is to detect and bring to puniſhment offenders againſt the law of the land, or whoſe habits and occupations render them from other cauſes very converſant with the moſt depraved claſſes of ſociety, may eaſily accuſtom themſelves to look with ſuſpicion upon every man.

Another ſource of ſuſpicion is the advance of age and infirmity. The mind, foreboding the near approach of the ſeaſon when its own powers, no leſs than thoſe of the body, ſhall decay, broods upon apprehenſions of diſregard, contempt, and injury; and alarms itſelf with imaginary tokens of neglect and unkindneſs.

Another ſource is, the ſecret conſciouſneſs that malevolent deſigns againſt another are harboured by ourſelves. From thoſe againſt whom we are planning miſchief, we expect miſchief. When Saul purſued the life of David, it was not difficult for the king to perſuade himſelf that his own life and crown were ſought by the victim of his oppreſſion. If we have carried our malignant purpoſes into effect, it may be long before our minds can be ſet at eaſe from ſuſpicion by the moſt ſolemn aſſurances of forgiveneſs from the perſon whom we injured, or even by the largeſt accumulation of benefits accompany-

ing

ing and following thoſe aſſurances. Though Joſeph, after he had brought down his brethren into Egypt, had added to his ſingularly affectionate declarations of unimpaired brotherly love the cleareſt proofs of his ſincerity; though he had nouriſhed themſelves and their families during the continuance of the famine, had ſettled them in the richeſt part of the land of Egypt, had perſevered in his fraternal ſolicitude during the ſeventeen years of the life of their father in that country to tranquillize their minds by a ſucceſſion of benefits; their fears were unſubdued. *And when Joſeph's brethren ſaw that their father was dead, they ſaid; Joſeph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him* (c). When did kindneſs, grounded on religious principle, ſhine in a mere man with brighter radiance than in Joſeph, when he met his brethren after this expreſſion of their diſtruſt?

A habit of ſuſpicion, from whatever ſource it may be derived, is among the habits which, under a given meaſure of encouragement, are of the moſt rapid growth. Has it been nouriſhed by indulgence? It recedes tardily, and with many efforts to

(c) Gen. l. 15.

maintain

maintain and to recover its dominion; and for a time will diſregard the diſcipline of the moſt powerful correctives. The following conſiderations may be inſtrumental in ſtrengthening the mind againſt the attacks, and in delivering it from the influence, of ſuſpicion.

A ſuſpicious temper is inconſiſtent with the ſpirit of chriſtian charity. *Charity thinketh no evil* (*d*), until conſtrained by forcible teſtimony. *Charity hopeth all things*; hopeth all things favourable of others, ſo long as there remains rational ground for hope. *Charity believeth all things*: believeth all things which kindneſs would incline us to deem credible, and which experience or evidence will permit us to credit. In our opinions, no leſs than in our actions, let us ſtudy, through the influence of divine grace, to be uniformly governed by the law of Chriſt. Let us do unto others as we might reaſonably wiſh them to do unto us; and think of them as we might reaſonably deſire that they ſhould think concerning us; and thus, in thought as well as in deed, love our neighbour as ourſelves. Where would then be our *evil ſurmiſings? Follow after charity* (*e*).

(*d*) 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 7. (*e*) 1 Tim. vi. 4. 1 Cor. xiv. 1.

Coolneſs

Coolneſs in forming your judgement is a neceſſary guard againſt ſuſpicion. By the precipitate man language and circumſtances are continually miſconceived: and, when he is under the influence of miſapprehenſion, are miſconceived for the worſe. Innocent expreſſions breathe an injurious purpoſe: proceedings neutral, perhaps amicable, appear tokens of enmity: caſual looks convey a dark meaning. Be well aware of your fears. Recollect your prepoſſeſſions. Give yourſelf time to weigh incidents. Overlook not particulars adverſe to the ſurmiſes which you are cheriſhing. Let not your concluſions be haſty ſuperſtructures raiſed upon the ſand.

Call to remembrance, in the next place, the ſhame which you ſurely cannot but have felt, when your ſuſpicions in former inſtances have been diſproved by events. *Abimelech ſaid; Lord, in the integrity of my heart, and innocency of my hands, have I done this. And God ſaid unto him; Yea, I know that thou didſt this in the integrity of thine heart* (*f*). May not your Suſpicions frequently have been as ſlightly founded as thoſe of Abraham were? May not God, who cheered Abimelech by atteſting his integrity, have teſtified before His holy angels the in-

(*f*) Gen. xx. 4—6.

tegrity of the man whom you have ſuſpected? The very man whom you now ſuſpect, you may heretofore have ſuſpected wrongfully. If the caſe has not been ſo; have not you ſuſpected other men, and on grounds apparently as ſtrong, and diſcovered afterwards that your diſtruſt was unmerited? Have not you been deeply pained, pained when the tranſaction has long been paſt, by reflecting on undeſerved imputations which you have tacitly foſtered againſt your neighbour, perhaps have openly expreſſed concerning him? Be watchful henceforth to have a *conſcience* in this reſpect *void of offence towards God and towards men.*

Conſider, farther, the diſquiet which you have ſuffered, when your own conduct has been expoſed to unfounded ſuſpicion. What ſurpriſe did you feel that your proceedings could be eſtimated ſo perverſely: that ſuch an action could be miſunderſtood: that ſuch a phraſe could be miſconſtrued! How unreaſonable and unkind did you deem it in others not to have enquired more minutely; not to have deliberated longer; not to have interpreted doubtful points in your favor; not to have made allowances for unknown circumſtances and motives. Remember how anxiouſly you have feared that the ſtigma might never

never be removed from your character, at least in the opinion of certain individuals. It may, that its consequences might intercept some of your fairest prospects, and disappoint your warmest hopes. Learn from your own experience not to entail upon others the wretchedness of being unjustly suspected.

Learn also from your own experience another lesson of instruction; the uncomfortableness of suspicion to the suspicious party. Suspicion, when warranted by decisive probabilities; when sustained by facts; when the unavoidable result of dispassionate reasoning; when essential to our security against injuries evidently meditated; is yet uncomfortable. Will you heap uneasinesses upon yourself by nourishing it without cause? When you are authorised with unclouded serenity of mind to look upon your neighbour as your friend; will you torment yourself by surmising that he is your enemy?

Observe too in how direct a manner suspicion leads to sin. The natural impulse of self-defence hurries us into measures to avert the evil which we dread. And the mind which is a prey to unjust suspicion is not in a state to be altogether judicious, or altogether scrupulous, as to the modes of proceeding to which it has recourse. Not only

is it likely to adopt meaſures ſtronger than the caſe, even were the ſuſpicion ſubſtantiated, would juſtify; but it is in imminent danger of employing ſuch as are radically ſinful. *Surely*, ſaid Abraham, *the fear of God is not in this place: and they will ſlay me for my wife's ſake* (*g*). Under the prevalence of this ſuſpicion, he immediately adopted the plan of diſſembling and equivocating by terming Sarah his ſiſter: a plan for the adoption of which under ſimilar circumſtances in Egypt he had already been ſubjected to a memorable rebuke (*b*). Even in the face of theſe warnings, his ſon Iſaac, enſnared by ſuſpicion, reſorted to ſimilar diſſimulation (*i*). Shall not a ſtate of mind, under which the rectitude of Patriarchs failed, overcome us? Let us watch and pray againſt the temptations which conduct to it, and againſt thoſe which attend it.

Again, to encourage a habit of Suſpicion is to teach ourſelves diſtruſt of God. Continual rumination upon the apprehenſion of injuries, and perpetual ſolicitude to deviſe means of repelling them, have a tendency to induce us to imagine ourſelves neglected by His Providence, and left to defend ourſelves

(*g*) Gen. xx. 11. (*b*) Gen. xii. 10—20.
(*i*) Gen. xxvi.

as we may by our own reſources. Hence, while love to our Supreme Benefactor is impaired, we are tempted to deſpondence by feeling our weakneſs, or to preſumption by confiding in ourſelves.

The preceding conſideration points at once to a momentous truth, a lively impreſſion of which checks ſuſpicion by mitigating alarm: *The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of iſles be glad* (*k*). Suppoſe a ſervant of Chriſt, harraſſed by gloomy forebodings of evil. See him carried away for a time by diſquietude; and revolving and heightening his ſuſpicions reſpecting the parties at whoſe hands he expects miſchief. Behold him ſuddenly rouſed to a vivid recollection of the unlimited power and goodneſs of God. Hear him exclaiming, "Not a ſparrow falls to the ground without my heavenly Father's permiſſion. The very hairs of my head are numbered. The mercy of my God is over all His works. All things work together for good to them that love Him." Mark how his fears are tranquilliſed. Mark alſo how, together with his dread of evils, his ſuſpicion that they are meditated againſt him decays. Do you re-

(*k*) Pſ. xcvii. 1.

cognize in this representation your own experience? If not, be a servant of the Lord Jesus, by the habitual and forcible perception of the sovereignty and the love of God: and you may hope in future hours of suspicion to be enabled to attest the truth of the description.

From this survey of some of the sources, effects, and remedies of suspicion, let us turn to the practical instruction, which the proceedings of the Apostles, on the position which has been stated, suggests. It inculcates the duty of endeavouring to prevent, and of studying to obviate, any circumstance in our conduct which may be, either in reality or in appearance, of a suspicious nature; and also illustrates the proper method of discharging the obligation.

If the apostles, when the complaint that the widows of the Grecians were neglected was laid before them, had not at once interfered in order to apply a remedy to the evil, if it should be found to exist, or to preclude, if the neglect were imaginary, all probability of its existence; they would either have proved themselves to be partial, or, on the most favorable supposition, would have excited very plausible suspicions against their own fairness. It is not indeed impossible, considering

ſidering the irritated ſtate of mind with which the murmuring of the Grecians was evidently accompanied, that ſome of them might even then be capable of ſuſpecting the apoſtles not to be altogether free from an intereſted bias towards their countrymen, the Hebrews. On all accounts therefore it behoved them promptly and prudently to interpoſe. What courſe did they take? They interpoſed without delay. And did they interpoſe prudently? With ſo wiſe a meaſure, that it gave univerſal ſatisfaction inſtantly. *The ſaying pleaſed the whole multitude.* Every complaint was ſilenced. Every complainer ſaw, that no cauſe of murmuring or of diſtruſt on the ſubject could ariſe again. The apoſtles removed the management of the fund entirely out of their own hands: and committed it excluſively to a ſelect body in the choice of which they took no part; a body in the formation of which the Grecians participated equally with the Hebrews. It is worthy of incidental notice how ſimilar, on a correſponding occaſion, was the circumſpection of Saint Paul. When his exertions had procured in various churches of the Gentiles contributions for the relief of the Chriſtians in Judæa, who were ſuffering under the preſſure of a famine, it is thus that he writes to the Corinthians concerning *the*

collection preparing among them alſo *for the ſaints: Whomſoever you ſhall approve by your letters, them will I ſend to bring your liberality unto Jeruſalem. And if it be meet that I go alſo, they ſhall go with me* (*l*). And in his ſubſequent epiſtle, when he refers to collections for the ſame object made elſewhere, he ſpeaks of *the meſſengers of the churches, choſen of the churches* (in compliance, we may be aſſured, with the uniform wiſh of Saint Paul) *to travel with us with this grace which is adminiſtered by us* (*m*). His reaſons for theſe precautions he does not heſitate to avow: *Avoiding this, that no man ſhould blame us in this abundance, which is adminiſtered by us: providing for honeſt things not only in the ſight of the Lord, but alſo in the ſight of men* (*n*). To revert, however, from this not irrevelant digreſſion, to the apoſtles at Jeruſalem; obſerve that, anxious as they were to afford ſatisfaction to the diſcontented by doing, and by doing inſtantly, all that was befitting themſelves for the purpoſe, they would not deviate the breadth of a hair from the line of duty. The Grecians appear to have expected, at leaſt to have deſired, that the apoſtles ſhould in perſon attend the daily diſ-

(*l*) 1 Cor. xvi. 3, 4. (*m*) 2 Cor. viii. 19—23.
(*n*) 2 Cor. viii. 20, 21.

tribution

tribution of the proviſions, in order to take care that it ſhould be conducted with impartiality. Such an appropriation of a portion of their time the apoſtles were immediately aware would be a departure from their peculiar buſineſs, and therefore poſitively wrong. Their office, the office which Chriſt had committed to them, was to preach the Goſpel. *It is not reaſon*, they replied, *that we ſhould leave the word of God and ſerve tables.* And they decidedly refuſed to take ſuch a ſtep; refuſed to occupy themſelves even for a ſeaſon, even but occaſionally, in the buſineſs. *We will give ourſelves continually to prayer, and to the miniſtry of the word.*

From this ſurvey of the conduct of the apoſtles, let us learn to *abſtain from all appearance of evil*; to watch over our character as a talent, as an inſtrument of uſefulneſs capable of being employed to the glory of God; *to ſtrive by well-doing to put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men*, who through that ignorance may aſſail us with groundleſs accuſations, or may harbour unauthoriſed ſuſpicions concerning us: and particularly to be prompt and ingenuous in explaining any part of our proceedings which we diſcern to have been miſunderſtood, or foreſee to be in danger of miſconſtruction. The apoſtles poſſeſſed

poſſeſſed in the tranſaction in queſtion, and it was the deſire of their hearts to poſſeſs in all tranſactions, a conſcience void of offence both towards God and towards men. It has often been, and well may we fear leſt it ſhould again be, otherwiſe with us. What then remains? Whenever we perceive ourſelves to have offended, whether by unwarrantable actions, or by injurious ſuſpicions, let us be earneſt to acknowledge our tranſgreſſion not only unto God, but, if conſcience indicates the duty, to the individual alſo againſt whom we have ſinned; and to any other perſons to whom the evil which we have committed, ought, under exiſting circumſtances, to be made known. Never let us be ſatisfied that we truly repent, if we will not thus give glory to God by frank and honeſt confeſſion. Cloſeneſs is foreign to repentance. While cloſeneſs remains, is there not a preſumptive token that pride, and a ſecret purpoſe of continuance in ſin, rule the heart?

But, farther, let us learn never to ſeek to clear our characters, whether juſtly or unjuſtly ſuſpected, at the expence of duty. Have we ſinned? Let us gladly bear any ſhame, any worldly conſequences, rather than diſguiſe or palliate the offence by falſe-

hood,

hood. *All liars ſhall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimſtone, which is the ſecond death* (*o*). Are we without cauſe ſuſpected of iniquity? Let us cheerfully ſubmit to the ſuſpicion, rather than adopt for the purpoſe of removing it meaſures in any degree repugnant to the ſpirit of the Goſpel. It is not uncommon for men, partly on account of the irkſomeneſs of being wrongfully ſuſpected, partly through a reaſonable regard to the importance of character, to take refuge in unſcriptural methods of preventing or of checking *evil ſurmiſings* reſpecting themſelves. Are they deemed, are they apprehenſive leſt they ſhould be deemed, parſimonious? They will do ſomething extravagant. Are they afraid leſt they ſhould be termed ſcrupulous and auſtere? They will ſlide into conformity to the world. Are they fearful leſt they ſhould be conſidered as too complying? They become proud and obſtinate. Let us beware *leſt, as the ſerpent beguiled Eve through his ſubtlety*, ſo *our minds ſhould be corrupted from the ſimplicity which is in Chriſt* (*p*); from ſimplicity of dependence on him, from ſimplicity of chriſtian obedience. Let us *ſet the Lord always before us*; and we ſhall not

(*o*) Rev. xxi. 8. (*p*) 2 Cor. xi. 3.

be

be moved from his paths. Let us commit our ſouls in well-doing unto Him, who *having Himſelf ſuffered, being tempted, is able to ſuccour them that are tempted:* and has promiſed that, whatever temptation may come upon us, it ſhall not in any caſe be irreſiſtible; but that grace, if we pray for it from the heart, ſhall ever be ſupplied in a meaſure adequate to enable us to ſuſtain the trial.

Finally: what if prejudice had ſo firmly faſtened itſelf upon the minds of the Grecians, that the Apoſtles had not found it practical to clear themſelves from ſuſpicion? They would have committed themſelves in well-doing unto the Lord. Has a caſe ariſen in which you, though ſuſpected without cauſe, are unable to remove the imputation? Feel not the trial too acutely. Conſider whether by ſome other proceeding you may not have partly expoſed yourſelf to the preſent charge. Conſider whether you have not been allowed to eſcape ſuſpicion, when you have actually deſerved it. Conſider that, when we accurately know our own intentions, we yet are not always attentive to minute circumſtances in our proceedings; and that it is on minute circumſtances that ſuſpicions frequently are grounded. At any rate,

rate, learn patience. Let *patience work experience, and experience hope.* The time of clearing ſhall aſſuredly come. *Caſt thy burthen upon the Lord, and He ſhall ſuſtain thee. He ſhall never ſuffer the righteous to be moved. He ſhall bring forth thy righteouſneſs as the light, and thy judgement as the noonday. Reſt in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him* (*q*). How eaſily can His providence, working by means apparently the moſt incidental, bring forward and eſtabliſh your vindication, beyond your expectations, beyond your hope, in oppoſition to every appearance of probability! If in his wiſdom He ſhall leave you without an earthly vindication, He will clear you at the appointed time before aſſembled men and angels. Look forward to the blaze of joy which will break in upon you, when the cloud ſhall at once be diſſipated, diſſipated for ever; and be cheered under your preſent darkneſs. The fruits which are now advancing to maturity under the ſhade ſhall glow throughout eternity in the Paradiſe of God.

(*q*) Pſalm xxxvii. 6. lv. 22.

SER-

SERMON XIX.

On doing Evil to produce Good.

Rom. iii. 8.

Some affirm that we ſay, "Let us do Evil that Good may come:" whoſe Damnation is juſt.

PERHAPS there is ſcarcely any precept of Scripture which has to encounter more of ſecret oppoſition, than the prohibition to do evil that good may come. The oppoſition to it is not always ſecret. To the ſyſtem of general expediency, a ſyſtem of which the moſt prominent and the moſt alluring characterestics are the permiſſion of the breach of every moral rule in caſes of ſufficient magnitude, and the authority veſted in every man to judge of the ſufficiency for himſelf; this prohibition ſtands in direct hoſtility. From that ſyſtem therefore it cannot look for obedience or for acquieſcence. The force

force of the prohibition muſt be explained away; or the ſyſtem muſt fall to the ground. We are accordingly informed, on behalf of that ſyſtem, that "the maxim which is in "every man's mouth, not to do evil that good "may come," is "in moſt men's without "meaning:" that its import is, "let us not "violate a general rule for the ſake of any "*particular* good conſequence we may ex-"pect." The prohibition, thus modified, (for in ſound reaſoning it equally extends to ſuppoſed *general* conſequences,) is ſtated to be "for the *moſt part* a ſalutary *caution*, the "advantage *ſeldom* compenſating for the vio-"lation of the rule (*a*)." This is the ſcanty deference experienced by a ſcriptural precept; a precept of ſuch importance, that the apoſtle pronounces the imputation of teaching a contrary doctrine to be a ſlander againſt the miniſters of the goſpel, and the authors of the calumny to be obnoxious to juſt and awful condemnation!

This is the love of God, not that we ſuſpend or abrogate, but *that we keep His commandments* (*b*). This is our *wiſdom*, not to ſpeculate whether it might not be in certain caſes advantageous to ſet aſide His plain injunc-

(*a*) Paley's Moral Philoſophy, 4to. 1785. p. 71.
(*b*) 1 John, v. 3.

tions and prohibitions, but to obſerve His ſtatutes *to keep and to do them.* So ſhall we be *a wiſe and underſtanding people* (*c*). When a ſcriptural direction is reſtrained to ſpecial circumſtances, or is otherwiſe limited by the words or the tenor of another paſſage in the ſacred volume; the reſtriction and the limitation are from God, and we are authoriſed and required to act in conformity with them. They are in fact explanatory parts of the direction itſelf. But to preſume by our own theoretical reaſonings, unſupported by the Scriptures, to ſupercede the obligation of a divine precept, is to ſet up ourſelves againſt God. It is to aſſume His ſceptre. It is to introduce and to vindicate univerſal diſobedience. It is to ſubvert the foundations of Chriſtian Morality.

The language, by which men delude themſelves and others into quietude of conſcience under the open practice of doing evil on the plea of thus producing good, is not unfrequently of the following deſcription. "If man-
" kind were in general diſpoſed to act with
" that ſtrictneſs of principle, the univerſal
" adoption of which would on every ac-
" count be highly deſirable; no relaxa-
" tion in ourſelves individually would be

(*c*) Deut. iv. 5, 6.

" juſti-

" juſtifiable. But unhappily the caſe is " not ſo. We are to conſider then, that lit- " tle good can be effected but through " the co-operation of others. Men are " the inſtruments by which we are to " do good, the objects to whom we are to " do good. We muſt take men as we find " them. We muſt deal with them, not as " being ſuch as they ought to be, ſuch as " we wiſh that they were; but ſuch as they " are. We cannot do good by them or to " them, unleſs we conciliate them; nor un- " leſs we adapt our mode of proceeding to " their actual ſtate. We muſt not ſhock " them by rigid maxims. We muſt not re- " pel them by unbending ſcruples. We muſt " win them to our purpoſe by arguments to " which they will liſten, and by conduct in " which they will concur. The fewer and " the ſlighter our deviations from moral " rules, the better. Needleſs deviations are " unwarrantable. But ſuch as are neceſſary " muſt be practiced." Mark, under the impoſing plauſibilities of this reaſoning, the real conſequences which are involved. Not only does it arrogate the power of diſpenſing with the obſervance of the divine commandments; not only does it tend, by recommending conciliating conformity to the

preſent moral ſtate of men, to confirm and rivet them in that ſtate: but it ſtretches itſelf to comprehend with open arms every exiſting degree, and every encreaſe, of depravity. If it poſſeſſes any concluſiveneſs whatever, it is concluſive to this point; namely, that in proportion to the prevalence of wickedneſs among men, a wider departure from ſcriptural precepts is allowable and commendable in ourſelves: that when the individuals with whom we are concerned diſregard God more and more, we are more and more to diſregard Him likewiſe. *The wiſdom of this world is fooliſhneſs with God* (*d*)!

On perſons in whom, through the growing influence of religion on the heart, tenderneſs of conſcience begins to manifeſt itſelf in doubts as to the propriety of concurring in queſtionable proceedings even for the ſake of an apparent good which is expected to reſult; ſome expreſſions of Saint Paul relating to his own conduct have been urged by leſs ſcrupulous friends with perplexing efficacy. "Will "not you hear," it is demanded, "the great "Apoſtle of the Gentiles? *I made myſelf ſer-*"*vant unto all, that I might gain the more.* "*Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I* "*might gain the Jews: to them that are under* "*the law, as under the law, that I might gain*

(*d*) 1 Cor. iii. 19.

"*them*

" *them that are under the law : to them that*
" *are without* (the) *law, as without* (the) *law,*
" *that I might gain them that are without*
" (the) *law. To the weak became I as weak,*
" *that I might gain the weak. I am made*
" *all things to all men, that I might by all*
" *means ſave ſome. And this I do for the*
" *goſpel's ſake* (*e*). Will you be holier," it is added, " than Saint Paul ? When he has
" diſplayed ſuch compliances with the ſtate of
" the world around him; when he has thus ex-
" emplified his principle of accommodation to
" the prejudices and the practices of the dif-
" ferent individuals, for whoſe benefit he was
" ſolicitous; when he has recorded with evident
" ſatisfaction his own example, and with an
" unequivocal purpoſe of impreſſing it upon
" others: will not you be accommodating, will
" not you be compliant ?" Let no perſon heſitate at any compliance, of which Saint Paul has given an example. Let no perſon fear to manifeſt any accommodation, which Saint Paul either by practice or by precept recommends. Let the great apoſtle be followed without apprehenſion. Let our ſole enquiry be, whither it is that he actually leads us: what is the path which he directs us to purſue: what are the accommodations, what the compliances, which he enjoins or autho-

(*e*) 1 Cor. ix. 19—23.

riſes. The reſult of this enquiry will not be found to aid the cauſe of thoſe perſons, who would bring forward the apoſtle as an inſtance and an advocate in favor of the doctrine which he diſclaims, and abominates the doctrine of doing evil that good may come. The path in which he proceeds, the path to which he directs us, is *the narrow way* of the divine commandments, the only way *that leadeth unto life*. The accommodations and compliances which he exemplified or ſanctioned were not ſuch as violated his own rule, and rendered him ſelf-condemned. They were accommodations and compliances not in things either in their nature wrong, or rendered wrong by their probable effects under exiſting circumſtances: but in things indifferent or right in themſelves, and, even if in their nature indifferent, evidently conducive at the time to practical utility. To the Jews he *became as a Jew*, by conforming on certain occaſions, for the purpoſe of mitigating prejudices againſt him, to ſome of the ceremonial ordinances of the Moſaic law: ordinances which, though no longer obligatory, might innocently be obſerved through prudential conſiderations, provided that the obligation were unequivocally diſavowed. And did the apoſtle permit any doubt to remain as to his opinion upon the point of obligation? His doctrine and his conduct

conduct were alike deciſive. He provoked the bittereſt enmity of the Jews by conſtantly proclaiming the extinction of all obligation to regard the Moſaic ordinances. And that very ordinance, in which at one time we find him concurring on motives of prudence (*f*), at another, when his acquieſcence appears to have been required on the ground of obligation, we behold him rejecting with determined perſeverance (*g*). To the Gentiles, who were *without* the Moſaic *law*, he became as *without* that *law*. Not only did he aſſociate with them unreſervedly, without regard to the ceremonial diſtinctions which had kept aſunder the Iſraelite and the men of every other nation; but he publicly *withſtood Peter to the face*, when that apoſtle, under an incidental impreſſion of timidity, *fearing them which were of the circumciſion, withdrew and ſeparated himſelf* from the Gentiles, and thus virtually *compelled them to live as did the Jews* (*h*). Not only did Saint Paul uniformly pronounce the Gentiles exempt from any tie of conformity to Jewiſh inſtitutions; but he ſtrenuouſly exhorted them to reſiſt every Judaizing teacher who would impoſe upon them *the yoke of bondage*, and to *ſtand faſt in*

(*f*) Acts. xvi. 3. (*g*) Gal. ii. 3—5.
(*h*) Gal. ii. 11—14.

the liberty wherewith Chriſt had made them free (*i*). Is it aſked in what manner *to the weak became he as weak?* Hear him, after that he has eſtabliſhed the lawfulneſs of eating meat which had been offered to idols and was ſold for food, declaring, that, if by partaking of that meat he ſhould *wound the conſcience* of his *weak brethren*, and lead them to eat of it notwithſtanding their ſcruples, *he would eat no meat while the world ſtandeth, leſt he ſhould make his brother to offend* (*k*). Is it enquired in what reſpect he *made himſelf ſervant unto all?* He ſpecifically anſwers for himſelf, by *making the goſpel of Chriſt without charge* to his converts; by not only *not abuſing*, but by *not uſing*, *the power* with which he was inveſted by the ordinance of the Lord Jeſus, *that they which preach the goſpel ſhould live of the goſpel; by labouring night and day, becauſe he would not be chargeable unto any, and miniſtering with his own hands unto his neceſſities, and to the neceſſities of them that were with him* (*l*). Thus then it was that Saint Paul *was made all things to all men, that* he *might by all means ſave ſome.* In things which were innocent, and either

(*i*) Gal. v. 1. (*k*) 1 Cor. viii. 7—13.
(*l*) 1 Cor. ix. 12, 14, 15, 18, 19. 1 Theſſ. ii. 6. 9. Acts, xviii. 3. xx. 34.

on

on occaſions when things innocent could not be miſconſtrued, or under precautions which ſhould prevent any injurious miſconception, he delighted to manifeſt a ſpirit of accommodation and compliance *for the ſake of the Goſpel.* For the ſake of the Goſpel he gladly receded from his privileges and rights, and ſubjected himſelf to ſpontaneous hardſhips. Such conduct he not only exemplified, but recommended. But how unfair, how perverted, is the reaſoning, which argues from things innocent in themſelves, and ſo circumſtanced as to be free from any incidental tendency to miſlead, to things in their nature wrong, or, if abſtractedly indifferent, likely, at the moment, to lend countenance to ſin or to error! How ignorant, how blind, the reaſoner, who imagines that he can deduce from the practice or from the writings of St. Paul any licence to *do evil that good may come.*

Throughout the preceding diſcuſſion it has been fully admitted that the motive alleged on behalf of a departure from moral rules, namely, that good might be accompliſhed by means of the deviation, was the true motive. The admiſſion was not more than equitable. The arguments of thoſe who plead for the deviation would not

otherwiſe have been fairly met. Yet it behoves every perſon who feels himſelf diſpoſed to contend for liberty to do evil, in ſome particular then before him, on the plea of producing good, to beware leſt he deceive himſelf as to his motive. Let him ſcrutinize it to the bottom. It may be what it profeſſes it to be: and if the ſcrutiny aſcertain it ſo to be, though the vindication of the motive will not in any degree avail as to warranting him to do the evil, he will have the ſatisfaction of being aſſured of his ſincerity. But let him not be ſurpriſed if the reſult be the detection of ſome other motive lurking in the heart, and governing the judgement. Let him not be ſurpriſed if the purpoſe, which he had aſcribed to a cordial deſire of promoting the divine glory by the furtherance of good, ſhould prove to have originated in a ſecret hankering after evil; in a ſelfiſh thirſt for the profit, the convenience, the gratification, to be obtained by tranſgreſſion. *And no marvel: for Satan himſelf is transformed into an angel of light* (*m*). A motive which impels to tampering with a commandment of God is always a proper object of ſuſpicion. It may be only erroneous: but very commonly it is ſinful.

(*m*) 2 Cor. xi. 14.

It

It is in a ſeeming transformation, as it were, *of Satan into an angel of light*, that the attraction of the principle now combated reſides. The evil no longer appears evil. It has changed its ſhape, its hue, oſtenſibly its very nature. It has aſſumed the form of piety towards God, of benevolence towards man. Then the deviation from the ſcriptural precepts is intended to be but ſmall: or, at any rate, it will be inconſiderable in compariſon with the benefit propoſed. Thus departures from truth, which, it is ſaid, will not only produce no miſchief, but will ſpare the party intereſted ſome diſquiet, are not ſcrupled. To win the favour of an individual by the aſſiduities of flattery, by humouring his unjuſtifiable prepoſſeſſions, by conniving at ſome ſinful habit in which he indulges, all being done for ſome good purpoſe in reſerve, is deemed allowable. Is a ſubſcription to be extracted from him? He is complimented againſt conſcience on his known generoſity. Or the importance or the diſtreſs of the caſe is magnified. Or the anticipated liberality of others is rated beyond probability. Is he to be rouſed to ſome public exertion? His influence is coloured to him too highly. He is aſſured that all men are looking to him: that if he

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ſhews himſelf in earneſt, ſucceſs is certain. Some perſons again fall into habits of acquieſcence in immoral proceedings, or of participation to a certain degree in worldly vices, for the alleged purpoſe of ingratiating themſelves with the neighbourhood, and obtaining intereſt which may be employed to carry ſome beneficial meaſure into effect. Others enter into faſhionable diſſipation, profeſſing that it ſhall be but little, their convictions at the ſame time remonſtrating againſt that little, on the plea of introducing their children to ſome knowledge of the world, or of placing them in the way of forming advantageous connections. It is perhaps among ſyſtematic partizans in political life that the principle of doing evil that good may come is the moſt frequently ſeen without diſguiſe. The prevalence of the party eſpouſed is pronounced eſſential to the welfare of the country. Every proceeding therefore, it is inferred, is to be conducted with a view to the ſupport of that party. Meaſures in themſelves unobjectionable, if brought forward by the adverſe party, are to be diſcountenanced, leſt their ſucceſs ſhould elevate the introducers of them in public eſtimation. The more creditable they promiſe to be, the more narrowly are they to be watched in all

points,

points, the more cloſely are they to be attacked in every aſſailable point; as in proportion to the real or imagined utility the authors of them would become the more firmly eſtabliſhed in power. If a propoſition brought forward on behalf of the party to which an individual has attached himſelf be revolting to his judgement: ſtill he is informed that he is bound to uphold it. Not the particular meaſure, but the general intereſt of the party, is primarily to be regarded. Would he promote the defeat and the diſgrace of his friends? Would he ſtrengthen the hands of their enemies, the enemies of his country? Delinquents of his own party he muſt defend to the fartheſt verge of poſſibility: thoſe of the other he muſt hunt down to the laſt gaſp. Such, in the language of determined partiſans, is the line of conduct which approves itſelf to the enlightened political conſcience. To ſcruple that line is narrowneſs of mind, is bigotry, is ignorance of life. How different are the principles of party from thoſe of ſcriptural wiſdom, equity, and juſtice! How different its proceedings from thoſe of *an Iſraelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!*

The progreſs of evil is always down a declivity. In few of the paths of tranſgreſ-

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ſion is the declivity more ſteep or more ſlippery, than in the track of doing evil that good may come. In this track the deviations, whether reſpecting the concerns of private or of public life, from the line of ſcriptural rectitude, will take place, not, as in other paths, againſt principle, but upon principle: not againſt the reclamations of conſcience, but with the ſanction of a miſguided conſcience. The ſtep is not hazarded with alarm, but advanced with confidence and complacency.

Neither are we to forget, in eſtimating the pernicious effects of the principle before us, that it will on many occaſions delude a mind, over which a temptation to evident ſin would not then have prevailed. Evil in its native ſhape would have been abhorred: under the ſemblance of good it is cheriſhed.

In the way of counterpoiſe to the attractions, which evil thus decked with borrowed ornaments poſſeſſes, let it be obſerved, that the amount of the temporary advantages to be obtained by acting wrong for the purpoſe of producing good falls very far ſhort of that which expectation anticipated. In its ultimate conſequences, this practice, in common with every other practiſe at variance with the declared

declared will of God, is, on the whole, decidedly and deeply hoſtile to human happineſs. In its immediate objects, in the particular ends which it ſeeks to attain at the moment, it is continually failing, entirely or partially. The fact is, that when once a perſon is underſtood as having adopted the principle, he is ſuſpected in individual caſes of acting upon it. He commits the evil, but does not attain the good. If he depart from veracity with the view of concealing unwelcome truth; he is not credited implicitly, perhaps is not credited at all. If he acquieſce or concur in wrong proceedings, in order to ingratiate himſelf with men, whoſe favour he deſigns to turn to the furtherance of ſome uſeful purpoſe; the diſapprobation which many will feel reſpecting the means employed by him will impair his general influence, and thwart his ſucceſs. If he be exerting himſelf with vehemence as a politician; his praiſe and his cenſure will loſe much of their force even on the ſtage of party, and more in the opinion of the public.

As remedies directly oppoſed to the malady, there are two rules, which appear ſpecially deſerving of attention.

Firſt: let it be remembered, that the eſ-

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fence of ſin conſiſts not in the injury to man, but in the diſobedience to God. Sin is *the tranſgreſſion of the Law* (*n*). The Law undoubtedly proclaims, *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf*: and *He who loves God muſt love his brother alſo* (*o*). But let no man imagine that he is at liberty to indulge his love for himſelf, or to manifeſt love to his neighbour, by *tranſgreſſion of the Law*. As there are ſo many offences, the viſible and immediate effects of which are injurious to man; and as human laws, watching over the peace and welfare of ſociety, proportion puniſhment according to the meaſure of outward injury produced by the offence: men are apt haſtily to conſider ſin as conſiſting chiefly in that injury; and are thus the more eaſily perſuaded that when a departure from a divine precept is adopted for the purpoſe of relieving our neighbour from preſent trouble, or of ſecuring an object which we deem likely to prove beneficial to him, it ceaſes to be ſinful. Scriptural views of the eſſential nature of ſin extricate us from this deluſion, and from its practical tendencies to evil.

Secondly: Have faith in God. Entruſt to Him the conſequences which are to enſue

(*n*) 1 John, iii. 4. (*o*) 1 John, iv. 21.

from the faithful obſervance of His commandments. Be aſſured that He has foreſeen all of them from eternity; that, foreknowing all of them, He promulgated His laws. Be aſſured that all His laws, with all their conſequences, are the reſult of Infinite Wiſdom: that the beneficial tendency of all thoſe laws, and of all their conſequences to thoſe who obey the laws, is aſcertained by Infinite Power. Harbour not the preſumptuous imagination, that there is any one of His laws, the punctual obſervance of which in the fulneſs of its real extent can be in any caſe otherwiſe than conducive to good. Venture not on the wild endeavour to produce good by refuſing or curtailing obedience to any one of His injunctions. *The fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than men: and the weakneſs of God is ſtronger than men* (*p*)*!* Have faith in God; and you will follow Him through dark paths by the light of His word.

A tree is known by its fruits. I cloſe this inveſtigation of the principle, to do evil that good may come, by ſetting before you from the Scriptures an example of its influence: an example, which not only eſtabliſhes the intimate connection ſubſiſting between that principle and the ſyſtem of general expe-

(*p*) 1 Cor. i. 25.

diency,

diency, but diſplays the principle as determining the perpetration of the moſt tremendous ſin ever committed upon earth. The Phariſees and the chief prieſts, who had long been bent on the deſtruction of our Lord, but at a loſs, on account of the reverence with which he was regarded by the people, in what manner to effect it, were rouſed by indignation and alarm, on perceiving how greatly that reverence was ſtrengthened and extended by the miracle of raiſing Lazarus. They *gathered a council, and ſaid; What do we? For this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe in him: and the Romans ſhall come, and take away both our place and nation* (q). The critical moment ſeemed to them to be arrived. The emergency appeared to call for the meditated blow. Yet how were they to ſtrike it? How were they to ſtrike it with ſafety to themſelves? They all dreaded to provoke the multitude. Some of them, as there are grounds for concluding, had qualms of conſcience as to advancing the entire length of putting to death an individual whoſe unblemiſhed life they could not impeach, whoſe miracles they acknowledged. Irreſolution pervaded the aſſembly. Then *one of them,*

(q) John, xi. 47, 48.

named Caiaphas, being the High Prieſt that ſame year, ſaid unto them; Ye know nothing at all: nor conſider that it is expedient for us, that one man ſhould die for the people, and that the whole nation periſh not (*r*). Becauſe, as High Prieſt, he ſtood at the head of the Jewiſh commonwealth, it pleaſed God ſo to overrule by His Holy Spirit the language in which this wretch expreſſed his deteſtable counſel, that his words, unconſciouſly to himſelf, involved a declaration of the momentous truth, that the atoning death of Jeſus was indiſpenſable to the ſalvation of mankind; a *prophecy that Jeſus ſhould die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that alſo he ſhould gather together in one the children of God that were ſcattered abroad* (*s*). But what was the counſel which Caiaphas intended to convey? It was as though he had thus addreſſed his colleagues: "Ye "blind and timid politicians! How groſs "is your ignorance! How ſhortſighted is "your fear! Do you heſitate between the "alternative of deſtroying this man; or of "bringing upon yourſelves and your "country, by paſſiveneſs under his im- "pious and rebellious pretenſions, the ex- "terminating armies of Rome? Does

(*r*) John, xi. 49, 50. (*s*) John, xi. 51, 52.

" expediency admit a moment's doubt? " What if there be danger from the people? " It muſt be hazarded to eſcape greater " danger. What if the man be undeſerving " of death? He muſt die, that we may not " all be deſtroyed: we muſt do evil that " good may come." What was the effect of this reaſoning? *Then from that day forth they took counſel together to put him to death* (*t*). Behold the maturity of the principle! Beware leſt you cheriſh it in the bud!

(*t*) John, xi. 53.

SERMON XX.

On the SUPERIORITY of MORAL CONDUCT required in CHRISTIANS.

MATTH. v. 47.

What do Ye more than others?

THERE is no truth which in the word of God is more plainly declared under various forms than this: that Jeſus Chriſt *gave himſelf for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works* (*a*). Chriſtians are to be, like their maſter, *ſeparate from ſinners* (*b*). They are to *ſhine as lights in the world* (*c*). They are not *to be conformed to the world* (*d*): but *to be crucified*

(*a*) Tit. ii. 14. (*b*) 2 Cor. vi. 17. Hebr. vii. 26.
(*c*) Philipp. ii. 15. (*d*) Rom. xii. 2.

to the world (*e*) : *to crucify the fleſh with its affections and luſts* (*f*) : to make manifeſt their conviction that *the friendſhip of the world is enmity with God*; that *if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*; that *whoſoever will be the friend of the world, is the* enemy of God (*g*). That theſe things are written in the Scriptures no man undertakes to deny. But it is one thing to acknowledge the exiſtence of a ſcriptural precept; another, to obey it. The deceitfulneſs of ſin is ſcarcely ever exerted with greater activity and artifice than in attempts to evade the force of unwelcome truth. That which can be controverted is controverted. That which cannot be diſputed is turned aſide. Specious objections are raiſed againſt the true interpretation of the paſſage. Or plauſible diſtinctions are ſet up to ſhew that the paſſage, whatever be the interpretation of it, does not relate to us. Thus when men indiſpoſed to genuine religion hear the ſolemn declaration of our Lord, that, *except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*; when they hear the Holy Ghoſt affirming by the lips of the apoſtle, that we muſt *put on the new man*, that we muſt be

(*e*) Gal. vi. 14. (*f*) Gal. v. 24.
(*g*) James, iv. 4. 1 John, ii. 15.

new

new creatures, created in Chriſt Jeſus after His image (*b*); they immediately labour to free themſelves from the plain meaning of a doctrine ſo odious to the natural pride of our hearts. Sometimes they affirm that the transformation required is only a moral amendment of certain parts of our conduct, a relinquiſhment of ſome groſs ſins to which we may have been ſubject. When preſſed with the force and the comprehenſiveneſs of the expreſſions; when conſtrained to admit that, if language like this is to be frittered down to ſignify any thing ſhort of a total change, of a completely new heart, there is no meaning in words: then they contend that ſuch a change may perhaps be required in an atheiſt, in a murderer, or in ſome other enormous offender; but neither is nor can have been neceſſary in ſuch decent characters as themſelves. Sometimes they take a ſhorter courſe; and maintain that the paſſage pronouncing that, unleſs a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God, and all other paſſages of the ſame kind, have no relation whatever to chriſtian countries in modern times. "To "the Jews," they exclaim, "and to the hea- "then all things were to become new. "They were to abandon their former opi-

(*b*) John, iii. 5. Epheſ. iv. 23, 24. Col. iii. 10. 2 Cor. v. 17.

" nions, their former practices, their former " ordinances, their former grounds of de- " pendence. They were to receive new ob- " jects of worship, new doctrines, new laws, " a new name, new modes of life and con- " duct. Of these men it might well be " said that they must be born again, created " afresh. But in a man who has been " brought up from his childhood in the " knowledge of Christianity, no change of " this nature can take place. To us therefore " the expressions in question are of no mo- " ment, have no reference." Such is that *wisdom of this world*, which *is foolishness with God! Professing to become wise*, we *become fools* (*i*). Look to the reason which our Saviour adds, when he has declared that, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; *That which is born of the flesh is flesh* (*k*): that which is derived from a corrupt stock is itself corrupt: that which descends from fallen Adam, inherits his depraved nature. Prove yourself not to be descended from Adam: and then, and then only, will it be possible that you may enter into Heaven, without being born again of the Spirit.

(*i*) 1 Cor. iii. 19. Rom. i. 22. (*k*) John, iii. 6.

When

When the miniſters of the goſpel proclaim, according to the charge laid upon them, that the ſervants of the Lord Jeſus are to be ſeparate and diſtinguiſhed from the world; the folly of the unhumbled heart is equally ready with its objections. "The world," it cries, "from which men were ordered to come "out, to which they were not to be con-"formed, to which they were to be cruci-"fied, was the Jewiſh and Heathen world. "Of that world what were the characteriſtic "features? Pride, ſenſuality, injuſtice, fraud, "ſelfiſhneſs, envy, malice, idolatry, and "the reſt of the family of ſin. That ſuch "a world was to be abjured, is no wonder. "But the world of the preſent day, the "world with which we have to do, is a "Chriſtian world. The ſtate of things is in "a great meaſure changed: and a corre-"ponding change is of courſe made in our "obligations." Look then to the reaſon ſubjoined by St. John to ſhew why the love of the world is irreconcilable with the love of God: *For all that is in the world, the luſt of the fleſh, and the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father* (*l*). Is not this a reaſon which will apply equally to every man to the end of time? But the conceſſions con-

(*l*) 1 John, ii. 16.

tained in the very objection which is combated are ſufficient. Let it have been once acknowledged that pride, and ſenſuality, and injuſtice, and fraud, and ſelfiſhneſs, and envy, and malice, and the reſt of the family of ſin muſt be abjured: and there will no longer remain a queſtion whether the world of the preſent day muſt be renounced.

Concluding then that the applicability to every man of the queſtion addreſſed by our Saviour to his immediate followers, *What do ye more than others*, will now be recogniſed: we may proceed to deduce from it, under His bleſſing, ſome of the inſtruction which it conveys.

Let us, in the firſt place, conſider the queſtion as propoſed to perſons, who profeſſing themſelves to be Chriſtians, are living in flagrant ſin. *What do ye more than others?* What do ye more than the Jews or the Heathen did? Did they *live* practically *without God in the world?* So do you. Were they ſunk in ſenſuality? So are you. Were they full of evil tempers and paſſions? So are you. Did they ſurrender their hearts to this world? So do you. Did they ſet Jeſus Chriſt at nought? So do you. Did they crucify Him? You *crucify to yourſelves the Son of God afreſh,*

afreſh, and put Him to open ſhame (*m*). Did they reſiſt the Holy Spirit? Even ſo alſo ye *have done deſpite to the Spirit of grace* (*n*). Behold how ſtrong the reſemblance is between you, and the Jews and Heathen of old, who, loving their ſins, *would not come unto Chriſt that they might have life.* Becauſe they perſiſted in loving their ſins, and in refuſing to come unto Chriſt for pardon and ſanctification, and life eternal: the wrath of God abode upon them, vengeance and condemnation are come upon them to the uttermoſt. If this was their doom, what ſhall be yours? But perhaps you are ſaying within yourſelves; "We cannot indeed deny, that we are guilty "of many of the offences, which are alſo laid "to the charge of the Jews and the Hea-"then. But from ſome of their iniquities "we are entirely free. And when we fall "into ſins of the ſame claſs with thoſe which "they committed, we do not by any means "tranſgreſs to ſo great an extent as they "tranſgreſſed. We are confident alſo that we "frequently perform various good actions, "which they performed ſeldom, if at all." "Now if he who hateth his brother is a murderer; if he who indulgeth an unchaſte

(*m*) Hebr. vi. 6. (*n*) Hebr. x. 29.

eye

eye is an adulterer; if the glutton, if the covetous man, if he who worſhips any worldly object whatever, is an idolater; if, in ſhort, the law of God be viewed in the comprehenſive and ſpiritual meaning according to which the ſermon of our Lord on the mount, and other portions of Scripture, teach us that the commands are to be interpreted and that we ſhall be judged; you, whoever you may be, who are living in habitual ſin, will not eaſily, I fear, prove yourſelves free from any of the wickedneſſes which ruined the ſinners of ancient days. Nor would you find upon a fair enquiry ſo clear an advantage on your ſide as you expect with regard to the leſs extent to which you proceed in particular ſins, when you compare yourſelves with tranſgreſſors of old time, or with regard to your ſuperiority in good deeds. But not to inſiſt, largely and unanſwerably as it might be done, on this argument; reflect how much brighter is the light, how much greater are the benefits, how much more urgent are the motives, in the face of which you tranſgreſs, than the light, the benefits, and the motives, againſt which either the Heathen or the Jews were hardened. You have not been brought up in the worſhip of wood and ſtone. You have not been trained in a de-

pendence on burthenſome ceremonies and ſhadowy ſacrifices; nor taught to imagine from your cradle that yourſelves only are the people of God. You are not encompaſſed with the terrors of ſcourging, and bonds, and death for conſcience' ſake. You have had the goſpel open to you from your childhood. You have never been tempted to look to any other religion for ſalvation. You live in an age and a country in which Chriſtianity is reſpected; in which a zealous profeſſion of chriſtian doctrine, and a faithful conformity to Chriſtian precepts, can bring upon you in any common caſe few troubles beyond that idle ridicule and contempt from worldly men, to which it is a mockery to transfer the name of perſecution. If the ſinful Jews and Heathen were condemned; what is the doom in reſerve for you?

In the next place; a large claſs among mankind conſiſts of perſons of decent life and reputable character, but of minds devoted to the world. To ſuch perſons let me addreſs the queſtion in the text. *What do ye more than others?* What do ye more than open ſinners? Some ſuperiority it is admitted that you have. But what is the amount? You abſtain from ſcandalous vices. Your lives are, within wider or narrower limits, moral. Your conver-

converſation is decorous; your deportment orderly. You do not encourage others in flagrant ſin. You attend frequently, perhaps regularly, the ordinances of religion. But are you in any conſiderable degree more ſpiritually-minded than thoſe who are openly vicious. Is not your forbearance from particular ſins principally to be aſcribed to their being diſcreditable; or to their being pernicious to your health; or to their producing expences which you cannot conveniently afford; or to their not being ſuch as you have any ſtrong inclination to commit? Is not your heart in reality as much ſet as that of the open ſinner upon worldly objects, though on objects of a different kind from his? Or are not you perhaps as much the ſlave of faſhion, as the drunkard is of wine? Or are not you almoſt as earneſt to gain conſequence, as the thief is to rob? Or are not you nearly as watchful to heap up riches, as the cheat is to defraud? Or are not you as ready to indulge pride, as the falſe witneſs is to forſwear himſelf? In the heart of the open ſinner the love of God clearly does not reign. Where is the evidence that it reigns in your heart? The open ſinner lives not to Chriſt, but to himſelf. Where is the proof that you are living unto Chriſt?

Let

Let the words of our Saviour be now propoſed to perſons who are really religious. *What do ye more than others?* What do ye more than the decent people of the world? More, abundantly more, be it gladly acknowledged. But is the difference nearly what it ought to be? You are leſs ſolicitous, for example, than the moſt reſpectable claſs of worldly-minded men to accumulate wealth. But is the diſtinction between you and them in this particular by any means proportioned to the difference between your reſpective principles? Is your unconcern as to riches manifeſtly ſuch as becomes a man who profeſſes it to be his duty *not to lay up treaſures upon earth*, but *in heaven*; to *labour not for the meat that periſheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlaſting life?* You are leſs anxious than men of the world for eaſe, and for praiſe, and for pre-eminence. But is your conduct as to theſe points as much ſuperior to theirs as your principles are to their principles? Is it ſuch as becomes men who profeſs *not to mind earthly things*; whoſe declared rule it is to *ſet their affections on things above, not on things of the earth?* In the management of your family, in the education and the ſettlement of your children, is there evidently that high regard to religion and the concerns of eternity,

that

that abſtinence from the appearance of evil, that oppoſition to wicked or fooliſh faſhions, that freedom from ſelfiſhneſs and ambition, which become the avowed ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt; which become thoſe who are commanded to *let their moderation be known unto all men, becauſe the Lord is at hand?* Is your benevolence ſuch as to ſhew that you are followers of a Maſter, who has declared that it *is more bleſſed to give than to receive*; who has commanded you *to love your neighbour as yourſelf*; who has pronounced love from one to another to be among the diſtinguiſhing marks, by which all men are to know that you are his diſciples? Are the tempers of mind which you manifeſt in your own houſeholds, in your tranſactions with others, in your general demeanor, ſuch as befit the diſciples of Him who was *meek and lowly in heart*, who laid down His life for His enemies? My brethren! I fear that, in ſeveral of the particulars which have been mentioned, perſons who are ſincere in their religious profeſſion frequently are not a little defective. I fear that frequently they are ſo defective, as by no means to do more than others. I fear that it is not very uncommon for the children of this world acting upon their low and erroneous principles, upon the principle of honour,

or

or ſome kindred rule equally referring to the opinion of man inſtead of the will of God, or from motives of worldly intereſt, or from the impulſe of mere good humour and inſtinctive feeling, to put many religious people to ſhame: to diſplay on ſome occaſions more chaſtiſed tempers, to exerciſe a ſtricter command over their inclinations, to ſhew forth more abundant liberality more practical kindneſs, even through the influence of pride, or of ſelfiſhneſs, or at the very beſt of that natural affection which the very brutes are every day ſeen to manifeſt, than ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt then evinced from love and gratitude to their Redeemer. If theſe things be in any reſpect ſo: can it be ſaid of you, that you *adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things?* When worldly men excel you, when they equal you, when they come near to you, in thoſe qualities which it is the office of religion to nouriſh, which it is the glory of religion to advance to perfection: where is then the effect of faith? Where are the fruits of the Spirit? Where are the ſigns of grace? Where is the evidence of a renewed heart?

We may learn from the reflections which have preſented themſelves the folly of judging of our own ways by the proceedings of others.

others. There is no mode of judging more general. "Why am I rebuked with ſo much "ſeverity," cries the open ſinner? "I act "only as is the practice of numbers; as "is natural to my age; as is conſiſtent with "my ſituation. Nay, if it be neceſſary, I "can point out many perſons, and thoſe in "very fair eſtimation, whoſe character and "conduct will not bear a compariſon with "mine." — "My proceedings," ſays the decent man of the world, "are irreproachable. "Look at the moſt reſpectable people in my "line of life, or even above it. In what "point am I diſgraced by a compariſon with "them? I may indeed have my failings: "but ſo have all men. My faults are as "few, and my virtues at leaſt as many, as "thoſe of the moſt honourable men. With "this reflection ſurely I may be ſatisfied." — The ſecret language even of religious men not unfrequently breathes the ſame ſpirit. — "I am as ſtrict in all things as other men "who are allowed to be ſincerely pious. In "my habits of life, in my apparel, and "other perſonal expences, in the whole "courſe of my domeſtic arrangements, I de-"ſire only to do as propriety requires. Do "not I act conformably to Chriſtian mode-"ration? Aſſuredly I do not go beyond

" the example of my religious neighbours,
" whoſe incomes are inferior to mine. Why
" is it thought that in ſuch a tranſ-
" action, I ſhewed unwarrantable ſolicitude
" for my intereſt, and that of my family?
" I know that under ſimilar circumſtances
" ſeveral of my Chriſtian friends have felt
" greater anxiety. When I lately was treat-
" ed injuriouſly, did not I bear the treat-
" ment with commendable patience? I ſaw a
" pious man of acknowledged calmneſs ex-
" perience a leſs provocation, and he evi-
" dently was much more irritated." My brethren! whenever we perceive ourſelves very earneſt to ſeek in the conduct of others a juſtification of our own; let us ſuſpect ourſelves of being deſirous to diſcover an excuſe for ſome unchriſtian conformity to the world. The ſuſpicion may not always be well founded: but there is always a probability of its truth ſufficient to require that we ſhould examine our hearts. This fact at leaſt is certain: that if you judge yourſelf by human practice, in your folly and diſobedience you hazard your ſoul. You forſake the rule, which God has appointed to be your guide: and you deſpiſe His commandment, which enjoins you to walk by that rule alone.

We learn farther, the importance of watch-

ing over the motives of our whole conduct, even of thoſe branches of it which appear to us the faireſt. We perceive what ſelf-command, what patience, what exertion, what ſacrifices of time, what liberality as to money, what a variety of other apparently good qualities and actions, are manifeſted by men of the world from worldly motives. Let us beware leſt the qualities and actions on account of which we judge favorably of ourſelves ſhould ſpring from no higher principles. *What do ye more than others? If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the ſame? If ye do good to them which do good to you; what thank have ye? For ſinners alſo do even the ſame* (*o*). Not only the decent men of the world, but even flagrant ſinners, men who *have not God in all their thoughts*, are capable of attaining on earthly motives many proper diſpoſitions and much external rectitude of conduct. But it is becauſe they have not God in all their thoughts, becauſe it is not for the ſake of God, for the ſake of pleaſing Him, for the ſake of obeying Him, for the ſake of giving proof of their love to Him, that they do things right in themſelves, but from ſome other motive; it is for this very reaſon that they are not ac-

(*o*) Matth, v. 46. Luke. vi. 33.

cepted of God. The deed which is not performed for His ſake is no offering of ſervice to Him. However right it may be in its outward character; yet, becauſe it is no token of love to Him, it will obtain from Him neither reward nor acceptance.

Some, perhaps, may be diſpoſed to aſk; "*How much* muſt we do more than others?" Hear, in words ſubjoined to the text, the reply of your Saviour: *Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* So ſoon as you diſcern an inclination to be ſinful, repreſs it. So ſoon as you diſcover a practice to be unchriſtian, abandon it. If you know that you have omitted a duty, perform it. If hitherto you have diſcharged it imperfectly, henceforth diſcharge it thoroughly. *As He who hath called you is holy; ſo be ye holy in all manner of converſation: becauſe it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy* (*p*). *Count not* yourſelf under any circumſtances *already to have attained, neither to be already perfect. But this one thing do: forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, preſs towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus. Nay let as many as be perfect,* as many as in ſingleneſs of heart are labouring to advance

(*p*) 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.

nearer and nearer to the perfect pattern of their Lord, and even they who have made the greateſt progreſs in imitating it, *be thus minded* (q). Let them be aſhamed for their grievous deficiencies; let them unceaſingly ſtrive to abound in the fruits of the Spirit. Let them give to the grace of God the praiſe of all *whereunto they have already attained*: and habituate themſelves in the ſtrength of divine grace alone to *walk by the ſame rule*, to *mind the ſame thing*, for the time to come. So ſhall humility, while it ſurveys the natural inability of man, prove itſelf a powerful incitement to exertion.

When a perſon who believes himſelf to be in earneſt upon the ſubject of religion, examines *what he does more than others*; the enquiry, whatever be its reſult, ought to quicken his ſolicitude that his example may be inſtrumental to their ſalvation. There are three ſucceſſive ſteps, by which a truly Chriſtian life contributes, under the grace of God, to lead irreligious men who are witneſſes of it into the paths of the goſpel.

In the firſt place, the conſiſtent ſervant of Chriſt lives down the prejudices, which the unrighteous harbour againſt him, and the ſlanders which they ſpread to his diſadvan-

(q) Philip. iii. 12—16.

tage.

tage. An evil world cannot love thoſe, who openly and radically differ from it in principles and in conduct. Their motives it regards as abſurdity; their conduct it feels as a reproach. *If ye were of the world,* ſaid our Lord to his diſciples, *the world would love its own: but becauſe ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* This hatred was manifeſted without delay and without meaſure. Not only was the ſword of perſecution unſheathed againſt the early Chriſtians in all parts of the known world, but enmity under every ſhape conſtantly purſued them. They were held up to general contempt and abhorrence. They were repreſented as fools, madmen, hypocrites, fanatics, atheiſts. The moſt deteſtable crimes were laid to their charge. Even the public calamities of wars, famine, earthquakes, and peſtilences, were affirmed by the heathen to be judgements brought down by the impieties of the Chriſtians. The holy followers of the Lord Jeſus were viewed with ſuch prejudice and antipathy, that every accuſation againſt them, however improbable, was eagerly circulated, and believed. Under theſe circumſtances what was St. Peter's injunction? *Have your converſation* (your whole behaviour) *honeſt,*

evidently and uniformly virtuous, *among the Gentiles. With well doing put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men. Have a good conſcience, that, whereas they ſpeak evil of you as evil doers, they may be aſhamed who falſely accuſe your good converſation in Chriſt* (*r*). My brethren; he who in the preſent day will follow the Lord Jeſus Chriſt faithfully and fully, cannot but be an object of diſlike to worldly-minded men, whether unbelievers or profeſſed Chriſtians. The true Chriſtian now, like the true Chriſtian of old, is not of the world: therefore the world will hate him, as it hated his predeceſſors. Though among ourſelves through the mercy of God to his church, its enemies are reſtrained from violence not only by the bands of law, but by the diffuſion of a tolerant ſpirit: they will ſhew their averſion by ſuch means as are conſiſtent with the temper of the times. They will pour ridicule upon the true Chriſtian. They will load him with opprobrious names. They will miſrepreſent his principles and his proceedings. They will liſten greedily to calumnies againſt him, and diligently ſpread them far and wide. How then is he to conduct himſelf? As St. Peter and the other apoſtles di-

(*r*) 1 Pet. ii. 12—15. iii. 16.

rected

rected the Chriſtians of early days to conduct themſelves. Let him meekly but ſteadily hold his courſe, walking in the ſpirit of Chriſt. Let him exerciſe himſelf always to have a conſcience void of offence towards God and towards men: and in all things to ſhew himſelf a pattern of good works, and to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour. Thus ſhall they that are of the contrary part be aſhamed, having no evil thing to ſay of him. Accuſations which have been proved falſe will ceaſe to be repeated. New ſlanders will meet with little encouragement or credit. A life of conſiſtent holineſs will be acknowledged to be no fit ſubject for deriſion. Prejudice will give way on all ſides; and will gradually be ſucceeded by reſpect and eſteem.

Such will be the firſt effect produced on numbers of thoſe, who behold the good works of the perſevering Chriſtian. In many, an additional effect will ſpeedily follow. The good works which they behold they will be induced in a greater or a leſs degree to imitate. Good works are of ſuch evident and ſubſtantial benefit both to the individuals towards whom they are performed, and to ſociety at large; and all the virtues of a Chriſtian life, when exemplified by a ſincere and

diſcreet follower of the Lord Jeſus, are in themſelves ſo amiable and attractive; that if they are unavoidably obſerved for a length of time, an inclination to copy ſome at leaſt of them can ſcarcely fail to ariſe. Hence it happens that among perſons who are far from embracing, far perhaps from diſcerning, the peculiar doctrines of the goſpel, a ſignal improvement in morals is frequently the conſequence of witneſſing the excellent lives of men of religion. Greater ſtrictneſs in point of integrity, takes place; greater warmth of benevolence is cultivated: groſs vices are abandoned: and the whole character aſſumes a more decent and commendable form. To have relinquiſhed habits which Chriſtianity forbids, and to have adopted practices which ſhe requires; theſe are alterations which, even when they are the reſult of very imperfect motives, ſmooth the way to a genuine change of heart.

The final effect by which the good works of the real Chriſtian, continually beheld, often complete and crown the happy conſequences already deſcribed, is that of opening the underſtandings and winning the hearts of men to thoſe principles from which the good works proceed. The beauty and the excellence of the fruit deciſively recommend the tree

tree on which it grows. No longer viewing the ſervant of Chriſt with prejudice and averſion, but looking up to him with reſpect and attachment; no longer miſrepreſenting his virtuous deeds, but accuſtomed to copy his example; his former oppoſers are convinced that the religion, which is the parent of uniform and ſtedfaſt holineſs muſt be from God: that the faith which thus *worketh by love* muſt be the genuine faith of Chriſt: that the path of the juſt which, as *a ſhining light, ſhineth* thus *more and more unto the perfect day*, muſt be the path of ſalvation. The Goſpel, which his life has contributed to illuſtrate they examine with impartiality, with humility, with devotion. To the doctrines of truth, which have conducted him to all his attainments, they yield a willing aſſent. They confeſs their own corruption, their own helpleſſneſs. They *come unto Chriſt for life*. From him they ſeek pardon and juſtification: from him they ſeek the renewing grace of his Holy Spirit. They live unto Chriſt who died for them. By faith, by obedience, by acting, by ſuffering, they glorify God throughout all the viciſſitudes of their earthly day of viſitation. And to the praiſe of His glory ſhall be their ſalvation at laſt, when

when they meet their Redeemer on his throne of Judgement.

Let your light, my brethren, ſo ſhine before men that they may ſee your good works; and, by ſeeing them, may be perſuaded to glorify your Father who is in heaven.

NOTE

NOTE A.

" ——— to leſſen the growing and too juſt re-
" proach, that in many of our cities, and in the
" crowded parts of the country, our Eccleſiaſtical
" Eſtabliſhment no longer furniſhes adequate ſpace
" within its conſecrated walls, that the goſpel may
" be preached to the poor." p. 293.

The fact noticed in the preceding lines is one of great and encreaſing importance. Some obſervations relating to it, which could not have been ſubjoined with propriety to the paſſage, have been reſerved that they may be offered apart to the reader.

The very deficient and limited extent of the accommodation attainable by the lower claſſes of the community in many of our churches, is to be aſcribed chiefly to two circumſtances.

The firſt circumſtance is, the encreaſe of population. Our parochial churches were erected when the number of inhabitants of England was ſmall in compariſon with its preſent amount. And no general proviſion has been made from time to time by the legiſlature to enſure, or effectually to promote, the erection of additional churches and chapels as the ſtate of population ſhould be found progreſſively to require. Hence in moſt of our large towns, and in many diſtricts of the country where neither the introduction of manufactories, nor the opening of mines, nor any other ſpecial cauſe, has accumulated

accumulated inhabitants; the churches are rendered by the ordinary progreſs of population incapable of receiving the proportion of worſhippers, which on an average might reaſonably be expected to attend. And where a ſpecial cauſe has drawn together an influx of reſidents from a diſtance; the evil is aggravated to a degree, which to perſons, whoſe conſideration has not been attracted to the ſubject, would appear, in many caſes, barely credible.

The other circumſtance is the diſtribution of churches into pews. This cuſtom, of comparatively modern prevalence, goes at once in its very nature to the excluſion of the poor. A pew immediately becomes an object of property; ſubject, it may be, to ſome reſtrictions as to diſpoſal, but an appropriated poſſeſſion. Pews therefore gradually fall into the hands of perſons raiſed, more or leſs, above the indigent. In towns, and in crowded parts of the country, they often are almoſt wholly occupied by the higher and middle claſſes, and are ſought with eager competition. The poor man is ſhut out of the Church by his poverty. Yet perhaps in a church thus circumſtanced, while both opulent men and poor men are complaining that ſittings are not to be obtained, there is regularly ſeen, during the public ſervice, much room unoccupied. In ſome pews, no member of the family is preſent. In others, one individual, or a ſecond, appears; while there is ſpace for ſeveral more. Why, it may be ſaid, do not perſons unprovided with ſittings attend, as in ſome of the churches in London, for the purpoſe of being received at a later period of the ſervice into the

vacant places? Becauſe the man of the middle claſs is in doubt whether on that day he ſhall find a vacancy to which *he* can have acceſs: and becauſe the poor man is always certain that he ſhall not. It is not to towns only that we may look for examples of the effects produced by the ſyſtem of pews. I could point out a village in my immediate neighbourhood, in which the church, were it ſtill in open ſeats, as it was within the memory of ſome of its preſent inhabitants, would be amply ſufficient for the accommodation of the pariſh. But though the vacancies in the pews are ſuch, that, were they filled, the number of perſons preſent would commonly be augmented, at leaſt, one third; the complaints and the difficulties as to obtaining ſittings are continual. Where then are the poor in our large towns, where are the poor in the metropolis, to find room?

Shall it be ſaid, "There are often ſome re-
"mote ſeats left for the poor. At any rate, the
"aiſles are open to them." Undoubtedly we ourſelves, like the objects of St. James's rebuke, may ſay to the poor man, "*Stand thou there: or ſit*
"*here under my footſtool.*" Some of the poor may occupy the obſcure corners left open, if left open, for them. Some of them may ſtand in the aiſles: or may poſſibly obtain there the privilege of a bench. But what are theſe petty helps? We forget that the poor form the bulk of our population, the maſs of ſociety. We forget that it is on *this* principle that our eſtabliſhment, if it is effectually to preach the goſpel to the poor, muſt ground its

its calculations and make arrangements for its churches.

One of the conſequences obviouſly reſulting from the deficiency, wherever it ſubſiſts, of accommodation in a parochial church for the poor, is this: that they are reduced to the alternative of frequenting no place of worſhip or of uniting themſelves with ſome body of Methodiſts or Diſſenters. Each branch of the alternative has been adopted within my own knowledge. That thoſe who *cannot* obtain admittance into our places of worſhip ſhould frequent the religious aſſemblies of ſome of our brethren in Chriſt who differ from us, ought to be a ſubject of thankfulneſs to ourſelves. But are we juſtified in driving them from truth which we regard as ſimple, and as taught under very favorable modes, to truth blended with error or preſented under circumſtances of diſadvantage?

The evils which have been ſtated are beyond the reach of private remedy. New churches, it is true, are occaſionally built. But, except under circumſtances which can rarely occur, they are commonly built on ſpeculation. The builder is to be repaid for the money expended by ſelling or letting the ſeats. Proviſion is made for thoſe who can pay for it: none for the Poor. I have been informed that the preſent biſhop of St. Aſaph was accuſtomed, when he had the charge of the dioceſe of Cheſter, to refuſe to conſecrate a new chapel, unleſs a ſpace were left vacant and free for the lower claſs. This conduct was highly laudable: and more could not have been done. Yet but little can be conſidered as

gained

gained. Small muſt be the ſpace which a builder would conſent or could afford to relinquiſh, in compariſon with the proportion of poor among the new population.

Nothing can reach the root of the malady but public and legiſlative aid. If parliament ſhall think fit to promote the erection of needful churches and chapels by pecuniary aſſiſtance and any other fit encouragements, under ſuch proviſions as in its wiſdom it may require; and under a general regulation that one half, or a larger proportion, of the Area, and alſo of the Galleries, ſhall for ever remain in free and open ſittings: very important benefits might be expected. If no remedy be applied, the evils muſt inevitably continue to encreaſe. And it may reaſonably be apprehended that in half a century, the principal part of the lower claſſes in the populous parts of the kingdom will have ſeparated almoſt of neceſſity from the national church. In proportion as men may dread religious or political reſults from ſuch a change ought to be their ſolicitude to prevent it.

FINIS.

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